

JULY - SEPTEMBER 1954

3/6

SIGHT AND SOUND

***The Film
Quarterly***



An interview with JEAN RENOIR

Michael MacLiammoir: ORSON WELLES

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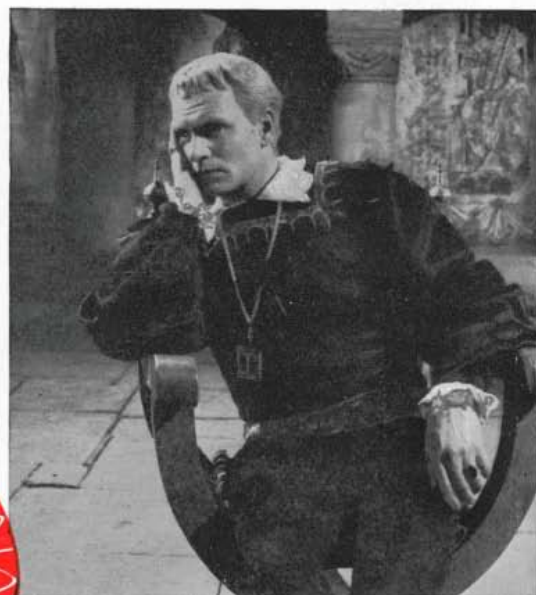
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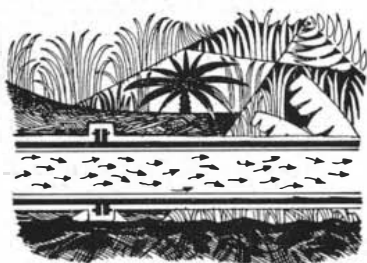


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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

***—Outstanding ;

**—Enjoyable or out of the run ;

*—Entertaining.

- **ABOUT MRS. LESLIE** (*Paramount*) Gently sentimental study of a woman who runs a Beverly Hills boarding house, with flashback reminiscences. Interesting mixture of Tchegov and *Back Street*: Shirley Booth magnificent, Robert Ryan good. *Reviewed.* (Director, Daniel Mann.)
- *BOY FROM OKLAHOMA, THE** (*Warners*) A genial, unconventional Western, in which the hero is stirred to action when his correspondence course examination papers are stolen in a stage robbery. (Will Rogers, Jr., Nancy Olson ; director, Michael Curtiz.)
- CARNIVAL STORY** (*R.K.O.*) A circus high diver is murdered by his wife's lover; vulgarly concocted melodrama, filmed on location in Germany. (Anne Baxter, Steve Cochran; director, Kurt Neumann.)
- *COMMAND, THE** (*Warners*). CinemaScope intelligently used to refurbish an otherwise routine Western. (Guy Madison, Joan Weldon, James Whitmore ; director, David Butler.)
- DANGEROUS MISSION** (*R.K.O.*) Average murder-mystery melodrama, with interruptions from an avalanche and a forest fire. (Victor Mature, Piper Laurie ; director, Louis King.)
- *DUEL IN THE SUN** (*Eros*) Huge, steamy Technicolor Western, centred on a lavish Arizona ranch where handsome badman Gregory Peck and solid, honest Joseph Cotten compete for the favours of a Ruby Gentry-ish Jennifer Jones. (Re-issue ; director, King Vidor.)
- *ELEPHANT WALK** (*Paramount*). Cholera, drought, resentful elephants and a fire in a large, widescreen, Technicolor melodrama filmed partly in Ceylon. (Dana Andrews, Elizabeth Taylor, Peter Finch ; director, William Dieterle.)
- *ESCAPE FROM FORT BRAVO** (*M-G-M*) Civil War Western about stern Union commander and group of Confederate prisoners in a lonely Arizona fort. Thin characterisation, but wonderful scenery and an excitingly staged Indian attack. (William Holden, Eleanor Parker ; director, John Sturges.)
- **EXECUTIVE SUITE** (*M-G-M*) Ambitious, all-star production concerning board-room battles for control of a furniture factory ; very highly polished, rather artificial. *Reviewed.* (Fredric March, William Holden, June Allyson, Barbara Stanwyck ; director, Robert Wise.)
- **FATHER BROWN** (*Columbia*) Some G. K. Chesterton episodes elegantly and agnostically remodelled by Robert Hamer : a light and civilised entertainment, admirably acted. *Reviewed.* (Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Peter Finch.)
- *GIVE A GIRL A BREAK** (*M-G-M*) Very slight, moderately lively musical about three girls all equally determined to play the lead in a new Broadway show. (Marge and Gower Champion, Debbie Reynolds ; director, Stanley Donen.)
- HENRIETTE** (*Cameo-Poly*) Two writers argue over a film script, and we see the results. There are one or two pointed jokes, but the film is generally done in Duvivier's heavier, rather flashy style. (Dany Robin, Michel Auclair, Hildegard Neff.)
- HUMAN TORPEDOES** (*Archway*) Conventional war story, showing how Italian frogmen attempted to blow up the British navy. Jingoism obvious at times ; underwater photography good. (Eleanora Rossi Drago, Pierre Cressoy ; director, Dulio Coletti.)
- ***JIKOGUMON (GATE OF HELL)** (*British Lion*) Fascinating Japanese film, set in the twelfth century, about a married Court lady and the unwelcome attentions paid her by a ferocious warrior. Superb colour, acting, everything. *Reviewed.* (Kazuo Hasegawa, Machiko Kyo, Isao Yamagata ; director, Teinosuke Kinugasa.)
- *JOHNNY GUITAR** (*Republic*) Post-Freudian Western set in Arizona with Joan Crawford, representing the squatters, and Mercedes McCambridge, representing the settlers, gunning madly for each other. Surrealist effects heightened by something called "Trucolor by Consolidated." (Sterling Hayden ; director, Nicholas Ray.)
- **KNAVE OF HEARTS** (*A.B.-Pathé*) A sophisticated account of the ups and downs of a French philanderer in London ; considerable style and wit, and notable use of English performers and London locations. *Reviewed.* (Gérard Philipe, Valerie Hobson, Joan Greenwood ; director, René Clément.)
- KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE** (*M-G-M*) Long-winded and pretentious Arthurian spectacle in CinemaScope ; of more respectable origins than *Prince Valiant*, but inferior in energy. (Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner, Mel Ferrer ; director, Richard Thorpe.)
- *KNOCK ON WOOD** (*Paramount*) Dressy burlesque spy-drama. A fair vehicle for Danny Kaye, whose best scenes and numbers are worth waiting for. (Mai Zetterling ; directors, Melvin Frank and Norman Panama.)
- *LIVING DESERT, THE** (*Walt Disney*) Disney's first feature-length Nature documentary, shot in the Great American Desert. Some outstanding photography is tainted by the familiar fatuity of musical and verbal commentary. *Reviewed.* (Director, James Algar.)
- *LONG, LONG TRAILER, THE** (*M-G-M*) Comedy about the trials of house-keeping in a caravan ; determinedly bright, occasionally funny. (Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz ; director, Vincente Minnelli.)
- *LUCKY ME** (*Warners*) The first CinemaScope musical ; cheerful and homely, rather than hard-hitting entertainment, with a pleasing performance by Doris Day. (Robert Cummings, Phil Silvers ; director, Jack Donohue.)
- MISS SADIE THOMPSON** (*Columbia*) Stormy workover of Maugham's *Rain*, with a downpour of Technicolor, music and thunderous U.S. Marines. But the slurs on the priesthood have been allowed to dry out. (Rita Hayworth, Jose Ferrer, Aldo Ray ; director, Curtis Bernhardt.)
- *MOON IS BLUE, THE** (*United Artists*) An innocuous comedy, celebrated for its difficulties with American censorship organisations, concerning a naive but forceful girl, an architect and a middle-aged charmer ; smooth writing and playing. (Maggie McNamara, William Holden, David Niven ; director, Otto Preminger.)
- NIGHT PEOPLE** (*Fox*) Cold war engagement in Berlin, in which Gregory Peck unmasks a Soviet double agent and restores a kidnapped G.I. to his parents ; over-stressed propaganda ; CinemaScope. (Rita Gam, Anita Bjork, Broderick Crawford ; director, Nunnally Johnson.)
- ORGUEILLEUX, LES** (*Curzon*) Yves Allegret's Mexican excursion ; heat, squalor, spinal injections, traces of the Sartre original, make up a curious, unlikeable concoction. *Reviewed.* (Michèle Morgan, Gérard Philipe.)
- PHANTOM OF THE RUE MORGUE** (*Warners*) A lurid 3-D horror, based on Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue*; Dupin has become a professor of psychology, Freudian before his time. (Karl Malden, Claude Dauphin, Patricia Medina ; director, Roy del Ruth.)
- *PRINCE VALIANT** (*Fox*) Arthurian CinemaScope. Based on a popular comic strip, it acquires from its original a lively vulgarity and vigour, with snappily anachronistic dialogue and carefree characterisation. (Robert Wagner, James Mason, Janet Leigh ; director, Henry Hathaway.)
- *RAINBOW JACKET, THE** (*G.F.D.*) Adventures of a boy jockey, taken at a jog-trot, but competently and unexceptionably done. Very medium technicolor. (Fella Edmonds, Bill Owen, Kay Walsh ; director, Basil Dearden.)
- SAADIA** (*M-G-M*). Romantic melodrama concerning a French doctor, an Arab girl, a Moroccan ruler and a battle between modern medicine and witchcraft ; location shooting does not prevent an atmosphere of almost complete artificiality. (Cornel Wilde, Mel Ferrer, Rita Gam ; director, Albert Lewin.)
- **SALAIRE DE LA PEUR, LE** (*Films de France*) Clouzot's shocker about the transportation of high explosives ; details of the drive intensely exciting, but as a whole the film fails to justify its considerable pretensions. (Yves Montand, Charles Vanel.)
- *SEA AROUND US, THE** (*R.K.O.*) Feature-length documentary of underwater life ; interesting deep-sea photography, somewhat pretentious presentation. (Producer, Irwin Allen.)
- *SECRET CONCLAVE** (*Archway*) A reverent account, severely hampered by cuts and poor dubbing, of the life and death of the newly canonised Pope Pius X. Its assets are sincerity, Henry Vidon's dignified performance, and the representation of the secret conclave called to elect the Pope. (Director, Umberto Scarpelli.)
- THREE COINS IN THE FOUNTAIN** (*Fox*) Three secretaries hunt husbands in Rome ; inferior, rather incoherent, magazine fiction, with CinemaScope views of Rome, Venice, etc. (Dorothy McGuire, Clifton Webb, Jean Peters ; director, Jean Negulesco.)
- TROUBLE IN THE GLEN** (*Republic*). Unlikely goings-on in the Scottish Highlands, with Orson Welles as a laird from South America; Herbert Wilcox's attempt at a *Quiet Man*. (Margaret Lockwood, Forrest Tucker.)

SIGHT AND SOUND

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ON THE COVER : Jean Gabin and Arletty in a scene from Marcel Carné's *L'Air de Paris*.

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We are grateful to M-G-M and to Longmans Green and Co. for permission to reproduce the photograph on p. 21, which appears as an illustration in King Vidor's autobiography, *A Tree is a Tree*.



de Sica

de Sica as director ; above, a scene from the first episode of "Oro di Napoli", his sketch film based on the book by Giuseppe Marotta.

de Sica as actor ; right, with Silvana Pampanini in "Un Giorno in Caserma," directed by Paolo Moffa, in which Daniel G  lin and Charles Vanel also appear.

Britain and the Film Festivals

National prestige abroad is a compound of many things, and there is no telling in advance whether a cruiser in a trouble-spot, a four-minute mile, or the success of a film at an international film festival may not plant the small seed of some future diplomatic success. As the Drogheda Report puts it: "*It is as easy to underrate the potentialities of propaganda as it is to overrate them. The effect of propaganda on the course of events is never likely to be more than marginal. But in certain circumstances it may be decisive in tipping the balance between diplomatic success and failure.*" A film festival—particularly one of old establishment or high repute—is an opportunity for propaganda. It should not be missed; nor, when it is taken, should it be taken other than in a wholehearted fashion.

The film festivals, of course, are a good deal more than this; the very confusion of motives, and of achievements, serves to complicate people's attitudes towards them. A festival, some would maintain, is organised primarily for the tourist trade; it is accompanied by a good deal of lavish junketing; political considerations play their part in the prize-giving—therefore it cannot be "serious." Or, a festival is too "serious," applies other than box-office considerations in giving awards, so that a showing there may jeopardise the commercial chances of a film. As so often in the film world, art and commerce cannot be neatly divided into separate compartments; the visitor to a festival takes what he wants away with him: he can stare at the stars, or talk to fellow enthusiasts; he can see the big box-office winners, or the small-scale experimental productions; he can regard the films as a distraction from his social life, or the social life as an interruption to film-going. The festivals would lose a good deal of their quality if they were wholly one thing or wholly the other; and, as the article on a later page of this issue suggests, their quality is in the opportunities they provide—opportunities valuable to everyone seriously concerned with the cinema.

In view of this, we cannot but regret that Britain's share in them has been, in the last two years, so luke-warm, so indecisive. Our entries have been less ambitious than they might have been—chiefly because the average producer may see little direct advantage in risking his film. Yet we have the films and, as the table on page 11 indicates, our failure perhaps lies less in the cards we hold than in the way we choose to play them. We are selling ourselves, and our films, indifferently, and are too complacently ignoring opportunities that have a political as well as an industrial significance. It may be asked what the effects would be in terms of national prestige if we chose to withdraw from the international film festivals altogether. It may equally be asked whether our present half-hearted participation may not do us, in the long run, even more damage.

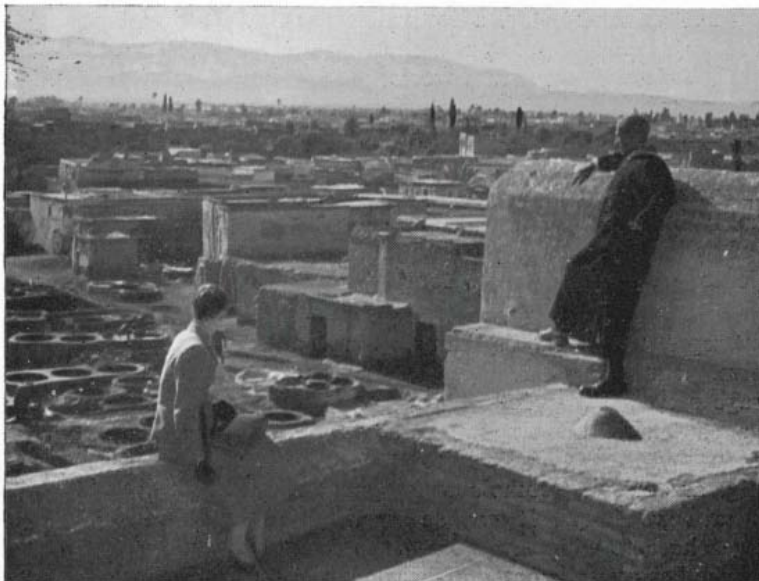
The Front Page

It can be argued that it should no longer be left wholly to the producers to decide the type and the scale of our festival representation, since the British industry has no organisation with terms of reference as wide as those of Unifrance, Unitalia or the American M.P.A. to co-ordinate a festival programme as a whole. The recent decision of the International Federation of Film Producers' Associations to grade festivals by categories marks an attempt at international control. Although this new policy has not yet had time to prove itself, it provides the opportunity for the British industry to approach the problem of festival participation more constructively, so that its commercial interests can be balanced with the political necessities.

Of the four I.F.F.P.A. categories, the industry as a whole is concerned with only two: A and B—that is, competitive festivals which all Federation members are encouraged to support (Venice and Cannes only), and non-competitive festivals in which participation is optional. The number of festivals in these two categories is of manageable proportions, and they include those in which the Foreign Office has in the past shown considerable interest. It would seem a matter well worthy of immediate consideration between the Foreign Office and the film industry as to whether a more effective liaison could not be established—a liaison which would ensure that at these festivals British interests, both national and film, were more adequately, more decisively, represented.

IN THE PICTURE

In Search of Charlie



It is forty years since Chaplin entered films, forty-four years since he left London to tour the United States with Fred Karno's company . . . JEAN QUEVAL writes: "Although I left Lambeth twenty-five years ago, I shall always remember the top room at 3 Pownall Terrace, where I lived as a boy; I shall always remember climbing up and down those three flights of narrow stairs to empty those troublesome slops." Thus spoke Charlie Chaplin in his "Transatlantic Talk" on March 5th, 1943. He seemed to think that Pownall Terrace was no more, as he described his antics there with his half-brother Sidney—dancing in the street to the barrel organ, or selling newspapers as far afield as Ludgate Circus. All the popular, one might almost say the conventional, feeling was there; in 1943, Chaplin seemed to stand in his own mind for Dickens' London, if not for Mayhew's. Yet perhaps it would be better to go and see for oneself.

Pownall Terrace is, of course, still there, although I would have been unable to trace it without the kindly help provided at Kennington Police Station. Turning off Kennington Road, you walk up five steps and there is Pownall Terrace, half concealed behind a wall covered with old posters. It is a terrace of ten houses, with two—not three, as Chaplin thought—flights of stairs. Its bricks are not brown or black or yellow or red, but like the fusion of a shabby rainbow of dirty colours. The doors are neatly painted in brown, though some of the windows are without curtains. Perhaps one prefers one's private sentimental foibles to reality—but I have to admit that I was disappointed. For Pownall Terrace is just a bit of cold, forgotten shabbiness in a clean, almost suburban district. By no means Kensington, as Chaplin's French biographers have it; but nothing of the East End either. The home, I thought, of lower middle class people, where quite fine new buildings proudly stand in place of old houses blasted away by the blitz (perhaps more than a sixth of the district was destroyed, they said at the police station). You can see TV aerials and mothers pushing healthy babies in their prams. It was difficult to imagine Charlie and Sidney performing their antics here.

Presently I did a most un-English thing. I sat on one of the five steps, looking round at the desolate yard of gravel and sand which is all that the tenants of Pownall Terrace can see, looking down. They can also, I reflected, look farther away into Kennington Road; and I remembered that Charlie had described, on another occasion, how Hannah Chaplin watched and imitated the passers-by: Charlie's art was probably born in those moments. And as I sat on those steps between Pownall Terrace and Kennington Road, I pondered on what a similar scene in Naples would be: children would have swarmed around, asking questions and begging. But this was London and the Welfare State. Presumably I might have stayed there still and undisturbed for hours on end, and learned no more.

But I wanted to know a little more. I knocked at number 3. An elderly woman, prim and energetic, opened the door. No, Charlie had not been back; but his son, Sidney, had come. I felt at a loss for further questions. Asking if there was anything left, some token or odd memorial of the Chaplins, was obviously naïve. "No," she said, smiling at my naïveté, and closed the door. So that was that. There was, of course, food for thought in Charlie's failure to visit the scene of his happy-unhappy boyhood, as well as in his son's pilgrimage. But all serious questions were left unanswered. I strolled past the Granada Cinema, a prow-shaped yellow-brick building just round the corner, with posters of Norman Wisdom outside. Then up to the sparrows and mothers with prams in Kennington Park.

An independent venture, "South" is the first film of Gavin Lambert, made on location in Morocco. It is the story of a young English girl who goes out to Marrakesh as companion to a wealthy widow. Above, Victoria Grayson (the girl) and Ahmed ben Mahmed, an Arab guide in real life and in the film; centre, Marrakesh, overlooking the tanneries; below, Catherine Lacey (the widow) and Lee Montague.

They had advised me at the police station to go to Somerset House if I wanted information about Charlie's birthplace. That must have been done time and again, I thought, but it was my last day in London, and too late to tackle a serious job of work; so why not?

It is all brisk and efficient at Somerset House. However big a fool you may be, you can't go off the mark. So I came across a Charles Chaplin, born in the registration district of Lambeth, sub-district of Kennington. I filled in a form, paid a little money, wrote an envelope to my French address, and relaxed—not optimistically, perhaps; but the best detectives are apt to overlook the most obvious line of research, and one never knows. A few days later I received a "certified copy of an entry of birth," concerning a Charles Chaplin, son of Charles Chaplin, bookbinder (journeyman) and of Mrs. Lucy Chaplin, formerly Dillon. I referred to Sadoul and found that I had mistaken the date—1890 instead of 1889.

Our Charlie Chaplin once said he was born at Fontainebleau, and later asserted that he was "a Londoner and proud of it." I had come no nearer than that: but perhaps some questions are better left unanswered.

M. Ripois meets his Nemesis

Differences in national taste can be very odd. British affection for such films as *La Femme du Boulanger*, *La Ronde* and *La Fête à Henriette*, all of which have been praised as "typically French," pains and perplexes many French critics, who must feel rather as we do when reading a serious appreciation of *Mrs. Drake's Duck* in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The recent case of René Clément's new film (*Monsieur Ripois* in its French version, *Knave of Hearts*, more saucily, for the English one) is, however, one of the most curious.

Awarded the direction prize at Cannes this year, and highly admired in France, Clément's film has certainly met its nemesis in the British Press. The native attitude seems crystallised in a synopsis provided by the critic of the *Daily Mirror*: "A story about a French wolf who comes to prey on our girls." And, perhaps significantly, the sharpest, most offended rebukes have come from lady film critics. "So shabby" was Elspeth Grant's protest in the *Sunday Graphic*. "A philanderer's story, with pretty but disjointed bits of direction, vulgar morals, and no point," wrote Dilys Powell in the *Sunday Times*, in a brief notice following considerably



Luis Bunuel's new film "*Cumbres Borrascosas*" is an adaptation of "*Wuthering Heights*"; Jorge Mistral and Irasema Dilian Star, and the producer is Oscar Dancigers, who also produced "*Los Olvidados*."

longer ones of *Carnival Story* and *Knights of the Round Table*. A harder slap was administered in *The Observer* by C. A. Lejeune—"an expendable and rather nasty piece" being dismissed after a longer and more favourable consideration of M-G-M's Arthurian piece. And so on.

Praise, in fact, came from unlikelier quarters. Both Roy Nash in *The Star* and Leonard Mosley in the *Daily Express* were enthusiastic. *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* appreciated Clément's remarkable handling of London, but each ended on a note of dignified withdrawal: "Not without a taint of what can only be called nastiness", and "not even Gérard Philipe . . . can quite prevent amusement turning, at least occasionally, to disgust, but that, alas, must be counted as a fault which is typical of a French film."

Alas, indeed. There is no doubt that *M. Ripois* has got under a lot of critical skins—to the extent that its skill and originality have been largely ignored. For whatever one thinks ultimately about the film—and its few admirers in England will probably not claim complete success for it—it is more than the story of "a tedious young roué and his colourless victims" (Paul Dehn, *News Chronicle*). Clément's "candid camera" explorations of the London scene are certainly unique in the British cinema: his inventiveness of style is undeniable; and his bitter, moralistic comedy scarcely deserves to be mistaken for vulgar cynicism. Even when disapproved of in their context, these are surely qualities worth discussion.

At all events, the mystery remains unsolved and its loose ends fascinate. Clément's view of British womanhood is not cosy, but neither is it "colourless": can there be, obscurely detected, some kind of affront to national pride in the French wolf's depredations on our soil? Is it for this that *Knave of Hearts* is more cynical and vulgar to British minds than *La Ronde*? And if the hero of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* had been French, would that film also have met its nemesis?

Italian Notes

ROBERT HAWKINS writes: More than welcome news: the return behind the camera of Vittorio de Sica after a year of acting chores. He is now shooting *Oro di Napoli*, a sketch film, based on Giuseppe Marotta's book of the same name, a pot-pourri of Neapolitan happenings seen from the inside by a native of that city. After long study, de Sica settled on

Another scene from "*Cumbres Borrascosas*."

it as a likely screen subject, cut down the wealth of material to six sketches, scouted locations—in Naples—with Marotta and Cesare Zavattini. Other talent involved: the comedian Toto, Silvana Mangano, Eduardo de Filippo, who, with de Sica, will act out the selected episodes.

Interesting items now on the boards in Rome: *La Romana* (*Woman of Rome*), Luigi Zampa directing Gina Lollobrigida, Daniel Gélin and Raymond Pellegrin, in an illustration of the controversial Alberto Moravia best-seller; *La Strada*, with Anthony Quinn and Giulietta Masina, about a gipsy couple's peregrinations, directed by Federico Fellini, who also wrote the screenplay.

Roberto Rossellini recently completed a screen version, starring Ingrid Bergman, of Arthur Honegger's *Joan at the Stake*, which he himself had directed, in operatic form, at its world premiere at Naples' San Carlo Opera a few months ago. Giuseppe de Santis' latest, *Days of Love*, is also awaiting release. His first film in colour, it appears an intimate *Bitter Rice*, illustrates a rustic love affair laid in the heart of Italy's south.

Current trends: the historical film, still riding high; colour musicals for internal consumption; soap opera feuilletons with "class"; episode films. Probable trend-setter: the de Sica-Gina Lollobrigida *Pane, Amore e Fantasia*, a minor *Due Soldi di Speranza* (by the same writer, Ettore Margadonna), lightweight, basic and amusing. It and *The Robe* have been running neck and neck at the Italian box-office.

Perspectives at Cannes

However strongly one may disapprove of him—or rather of his behaviour sometimes, as for instance his proposing the toast of honour to *la vedette la plus belle, la plus gracieuse du Festival*: *La Begum Aga Khan*—one is still apt to end up quoting Cocteau. He is so often right. He was right at Cannes, when he summed up the seventh International Film Festival with the remark that anybody can now make a film. The language is formed: all that is needed is the particular motive, the subject, the vision.

This is not so obvious as perhaps it seems: and as a comment on Cannes this year it was entirely appropriate. For this was not one of those festivals which can best be characterised by a recital of the individual masterpieces, the discoveries first brought to light there. Indeed, judged simply on the films shown, it was not an outstanding occasion. The technical standard of work was high: films were well shot, well cut, the syntax of cinema correctly employed. But what struck one was the rarity with which this formed language was freshly, surprisingly, stimulatingly used. This may appear a rather dull point of significance, but it leads at least to a general view of the cinema today.

You cannot, after all, see for a fortnight films from nearly forty countries without achieving some sense of perspective. Of course, what we saw was not necessarily the best: intrigues, squabbles, and plain mistakes had often affected the national selections. Thus the British offering was unnecessarily weak; the French sent a limp remake of *Le Grand Jeu* instead of the latest Becker; the Americans foolishly relied on the glamour of CinemaScope to support a mediocre selection. Yet it might well be argued that for this very reason the impression of the world's cinema at Cannes was a truly representative one.

The impression was an odd mixture of the encouraging and the dispiriting. It was encouraging that in the perspective of this festival the bogeys of TV, of 3-D and the new monster systems, which have loomed so large during the past year, seemed reduced to manageable proportions. For the first time productions in CinemaScope were competing: the failure of the system—as a system—was complete. Disney's lively cartoon (his first in CinemaScope), *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom*, was given a prize, and the French *Nouveaux Horizons* was deservedly applauded for its intelligent use of the panoramic screen in a series of fine mountain-scapes; but the two American demonstrations, *Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef* and *Knights of the Round Table*, were merely endured. The idea that there is a magic in the panoramic screen which must displace standard production regardless of quality was effectively dispelled.

As for the language of cinema: the most evident advance was in the use of colour. In Britain, where we seem until

recently to have been restricted almost entirely to Technicolor, at least as far as features go, we have little idea of the widespread and adventurous experiments elsewhere in the world. (In Paris I visited two film studios: Christian-Jaque directing a new Martine Carol extravaganza, and Autant-Lara directing Darrieux and Philipe in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Both were being shot in Eastman Color.) At Cannes there were no less than seven systems on view: Technicolor, Eastman Color, Agfacolor, Sovcolor, Gevacolor, Ferranacolor and Cinephotocolor. It soon became evident that success in each depends largely on the skill of the cameraman and the taste of the designer: the Eastman Color of the Japanese *Gate of Hell* was reported to be exquisite, as were many of the landscapes in the Russian and other Eastern films (Sovcolor and Agfacolor). Technicolor showed to less advantage—chiefly, one imagines, because producers of a certain type of American film favour vulgarity of effect, in a deliberate attempt to cater for a low level of public taste.

That colour used to express and enrich is a desirable innovation, is obvious. At the moment, though, it tends to be too often used for its own sake, substituting for style instead of being assimilated into it. One notices this particularly in the films from the East, whose Agfacolor exteriors are often so striking that the effect of a sunset, or a summer riverside, is felt to be sufficient in itself, absolving the director from the responsibility to dramatise, to turn photography into cinema. (A weakness analogous to the paralysis of the camera in the early days of sound.) This, however, is a weakness which greater familiarity with colour will surely correct. More disturbing perhaps is the possibility of the total banishment of black-and-white: all three Russian features were in colour; so were the single offerings of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Two of the three French films were in Eastman Color; two of the four American entries in Technicolor. Many of these achieved valid and exciting decorative effects; yet such successes were not such as to make one feel any deficiency in the black-and-white camerawork of, say, *From Here to Eternity*, in the sad and grubby London recorded by Oswald Morris for René Clement's *Monsieur Ripois*, or in the devoted concentration (again in monochrome) on human faces and attitudes which distinguished the Spanish *Comicos*.

Colour apart, the language is there; films came to Cannes from Egypt, Greece and Spain whose vocabulary was impoverished by none of the limitations of primitivism. But the question remains: what is being done with the language? And here the impression begins to be dispiriting. It is as if the cinema, at this of all times, were resolutely shirking its proper subjects. Even Documentary seems to have turned its back on the human race. Five or six different films at Cannes invited us to watch the copulation of dragon flies; there was an outstanding French short (the best French film, alas!) about penguins—*Aptenodytes Forsteri*; Sucksdorff showed his *The Great Adventure*, in which foxes and birds are observed with so much more success than his own children; and of course there was Disney's *The Living Desert* to portray with astounding, if suspect, skill the *mores* of mice, snakes and tarantulas. But documentaries on themes more relevant to the human situation showed technical prowess rather than intensity of feeling: herring fishing and oil-getting (Holland); the rebuilding of Warsaw; many conscientious explorations of works of art, tapestries and churches. Terribly lacking in these films is any sort of cutting edge, any capacity for disturbance or revelation. We have seen them all before.

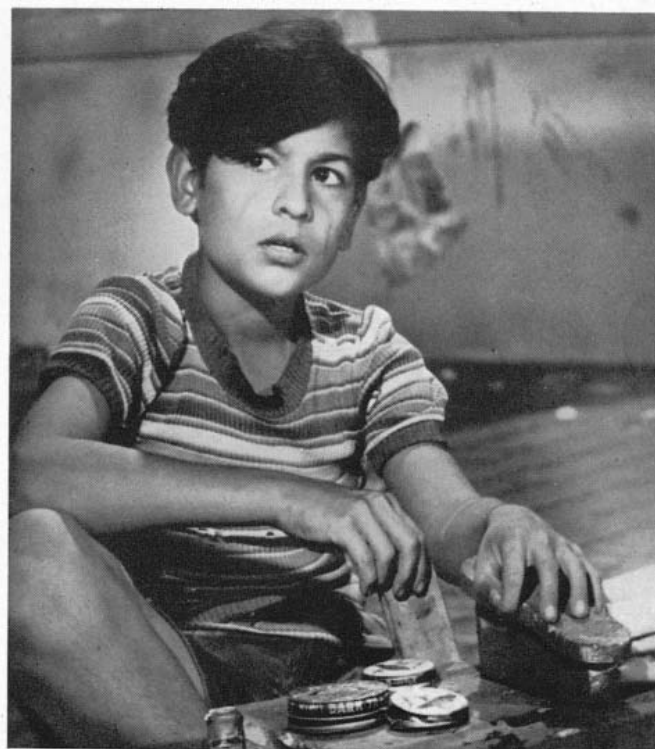
The dramatic cinema too, over large areas of the world, seems static, awaiting its new poets—or suppressing them? It was sad to find that the French cinema, which is so resolutely keeping down its young, talented directors, had at last permitted Georges Rouquier to make a feature film—*Sang et Lumières*—only to saddle him with a banal story (bull-fighting theme) and Zsa Zsa Gabor. *Le Grand Jeu*, exhumed and refurbished by Spaak and directed by Siodmak, proved as silly as it was lifeless. *Avant le Deluge*, another exercise in special pleading by the lawyer Cayatte, this time on the promising subject of delinquent French bourgeois youth, revolted by reason of its cold falsity. Two Italian productions were distinctly superior to either of these: *Carossello Napole-*

ITALY: "Carosello Napoletano." Two and a half hours of song, ballet and spectacle in a series of variations on Neapolitan history.



SPAIN: "Comicos" (above), a first film by J. A. Bardem: strikingly loyal to its subject, sensitive to atmosphere and personality.

INDIA: "Two Acres of Land" (right), a small-scale drama of dispossession, not unworthy of its evident model—"Bicycle Thieves."



FILMS AT CANNES

tano, a fantastically lavish and lengthy musical entertainment, with some marvellous visual *coups-de-théâtre* and staging of unbridled vivacity; and the serious and sympathetic *Cronaca di Poveri Amanti*, strung together from Pratolini's novel, without much power of drama, but with at least some sense of social responsibility and indignation, by a new young director, Carlo Lizzani.

No comment is needed on the American entries, all of which have now been seen in Britain: *From Here to Eternity*, *Little Boy Lost*, *Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef* and *Knights of the Round Table*. Once again, Disney came in handy for the awarding to Hollywood of its statutory prizes. (Mention should be made, in all dispatches, of the heroic fight put up by the jury, under Cocteau, against heavy pressure, to give the Grand Prix to *From Here to Eternity*. Finally, to prevent catastrophe, it had to be declared out-of-competition and given a special mention—but not the Grand Prix.) The German entry was composed of one kitschy Heavy, and an equally ponderous musical romance; Britain made an error in entering *The Kidnappers* (a film which seemed tepid to the French after their own *Jeux Interdits*); and *Man of Africa*, from Group 3, was not greeted with much acclamation. Spain's two features achieved a higher level—*Anything Can Happen in Granada*, a pleasant and unassuming comedy, and the remarkable *Comicos (Actors)*, a loving and understanding tribute to its subject by a young director, J. A. Bardem.

Other achievements shone like lonely lights across the dark wastes of mediocrity. From Japan, the beautiful *Gate of Hell*, which is reviewed at length elsewhere in this issue. The brilliance of Clément's *Monsieur Ripois*—for at least eighty per cent of its length—has to be admitted even by those who (like myself) dislike the film. From India, an unexpected essay in neo-realism (the influence of *Bicycle Thieves* is obvious) won a deserved success: *Two Acres of Land* is a film of genuine feeling, compassionate and angry for the under-privileged, courageously done. And let us not forget *The Pleasure Garden*, which won a prize for Britain.

I have left to the last the films from the East, a homogeneous group which contained no masterpiece, and yet contributed to the festival an element elsewhere conspicuously lacking. We are accustomed nowadays to hold the Russian cinema rather in scorn; and it is certainly easy to poke fun at those romantic idylls which spring from a common interest in beet-production. Perhaps it is too easy. True, neither the Russian cinema of this period, nor Poland, Czechoslovakia nor Hungary, appear yet to have produced individual poets of distinction (with the possible exception of Alexander Ford in Poland): their films are solid and predictable rather than dynamic and exciting. Yet at Cannes the fact could not be escaped: as distinct from the disintegrated achievement of the Western nations, where the individual voices are plainly those of eccentrics, and the over-all tone tends to be one of oppressive commercialism—distinct from these, the cinemas of the East obviously draw valid inspiration from the general air they breathe. Compare *Scander-Beg*, the impressive Russo-Albanian historical saga, with anything yet done on CinemaScope; contrast *Avant le Déluge* with Ford's *Five from Barska Street*, a story of youthful delinquents in post-war Warsaw, forced here and there into the propagandist mould, but powerfully told, alive nevertheless with true human feeling and idealism. Outside this bloc, the only film with social implications which made any impact beyond that of protest was an Austro-Yugoslav co-production, *The Last Bridge*, a brave and stirring plea for internationalism and human love.

Before the festival began, Cocteau voiced the hope that it would be a no-man's-land of art, in which politics had no place. Easier said than done. For the reflective and the observant it proved impossible regularly to attend the programmes at Cannes without a picture emerging whose implications were, at least in part, political. The Western nations will do their cause no good by leaving the cinema to the money-men.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

POLAND: "Five from Barska Street"—delinquent boys in post-war Warsaw. A new film by Alexander Ford.

British Lion

As we go to press, we learn that the National Film Finance Corporation have decided, with the approval of the Government, to appoint a receiver and manager for the British Lion Film Corporation. In a statement issued on June 1st, the N.F.F.C. announced: "It is apparent that the entire share capital of the British Lion Film Corporation Ltd. has been lost and that a very substantial part of the loan of £3,000,000 due by the Company to the National Film Finance Corporation will be irrecoverable. . . . In these circumstances, it is evident that a major change is necessary, in order to safeguard the position and to ensure the continuation of the important distribution and studio facilities provided by British Lion." The Shepperton studio is owned by a separate subsidiary company of British Lion, and the N.F.F.C. hopes that it will continue to operate.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

Carol Reed: *A Kid for Two Farthings*, from the sentimental fantasy of East End life by Wolf Mankowitz.
Sidney Gilliat: *The Constant Husband*, a story of a man who loses his memory and has to investigate his own past; with Rex Harrison, Margaret Leighton and Cecil Parker.
Charles Crichton: *The Divided Hearts*; Yvonne Mitchell plays a Yugoslav woman whose child has been taken from her; Cornell Borchers is the German foster mother.
John Huston: *Moby Dick*, from a script by Huston and Ray Bradbury, with Gregory Peck.
Edward Dmytryk: *The End of the Affair*. Deborah Kerr stars in this adaptation, by Lenore Coffee, of the Graham Greene novel.

U.S.A.

Billy Wilder: *The Spirit of St. Louis*, the story of the Lindbergh flight.
John Ford: *Mr. Roberts*, in CinemaScope, with Henry Fonda and James Cagney.
Howard Hawks: *Land of the Pharaohs*, a location epic, complete with CinemaScope and WarnerColor, on the building of the First Pyramid. Jack Hawkins stars, and the original screenplay is by William Faulkner.
Stanley Kramer returns to independent production with *Not As a Stranger*, a best-selling story about a doctor, adapted by Edward and Edna Anhalt. Kramer, now installed on the old Chaplin lot, intends to revert to his earlier, one-picture-at-a-time production methods.

Spain

From his headquarters at a Madrid studio, Orson Welles is working on his new picture, *Mr. Arkadin*. In structure apparently somewhat reminiscent of *Citizen Kane*, it concerns the efforts of a young man to uncover, through conversations with his associates, the past record of a mysterious, and shady, millionaire. Welles himself plays the millionaire; others in the cast are Marlene Dietrich and Michael Redgrave.



International encounter: at the Cannes Festival, Robert Mitchum meets the Soviet director Georgi Alexandrov.



INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

IN 1932, the first international film festival was held at Venice as part of that city's old-established biennial exhibition of *beaux-arts*. The "Biennale" still functions according to its name, but the film part of it has long been an annual event, and has set the pattern for film festivals generally. At the festival, which now lasts about sixteen days, films from various countries are screened in a special cinema before an international audience, and also before a jury who make awards as they see fit. These awards—a Gold Lion for the winner, Silver and Bronze Lions for the numerous runners-up—have a prestige value only and carry no monetary prize.

After the screenings, the most important of which take place in the evening, there is normally a reception or party given by the official representatives of the various national film organisations. There is a natural tendency, money permitting, for the competitive spirit to infuse these receptions with considerable luxury, and it has been suggested that the international prestige of a particular film industry may gain as much from the excellence of its party as from the worth of its films.

Apart from the attraction of the films themselves, with the attendant excitements of awards and hospitality, the presence of all the hand-picked celebrities cornered in such a location ensures for Venice a guaranteed "money-spinner" among tourists; and this magnet, however important its cultural significance, is particularly useful in an out-of-season period.

The success of the Venice Festival, in both its artistic and tourist aspects, encouraged other municipalities and governments to consider this new form of publicity. In

1939, Cannes arranged to rival Venice. Unfortunately, however, the organisers chose an inauspicious date, September 3rd, and the festival had to be postponed until 1946. By then, the obvious benefits of a film festival were realised by many *syndicats d'initiative* and hotel groups anxious to revive or create the popularity of their localities, especially in slack periods of the year. Before long, festivals spread across Europe, and beyond, like ground-elder in an unkept garden.

The result of this proliferation was a collection of annual events, conducted in a heterogeneous fashion, but all claiming international status and high importance; some strictly competitive, others less strictly competitive, and others again avoiding the pitfalls of prize-giving but trusting in Coubertin's words in another international connection that, "the important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part."

II

To the individual producer, however, the question may be whether to take part at all. The risks allegedly encountered in entering a film for a festival have frequently been discussed. On the credit side, the producer has the chance to show his film to an influential international audience; he has the hope of winning an award and so improving his professional standing; he has access to useful publicity for himself, his picture and his stars. Each of these potential advantages, though, is felt to have a corresponding drawback. His film may be disliked by the audience and panned by the critics, so jeopardising its box-office chances. It is claimed that the mere fact that a film has been shown at a festival gives it, in the eyes of some

distributors, an unwelcome connotation; it is a "festival film," therefore it is automatically "arty," therefore it is unsuitable for general release. And there is more than one case of the distribution contract for a British film in a continental country being cancelled because the film was shown at a festival in that country. Even if the film wins an award, this does not necessarily ensure that it will find favour with the distributors, or that it has been acceptable to the international critics, for there is frequently more political discretion than artistic judgment in the findings of a jury at an international festival. (This does not apply, of course, to the non-competitive festivals, of which the most notable is Edinburgh. Edinburgh, indeed, owes part of its prestige as the leading "serious" festival to the fact that a selection committee has always vetted the entries in advance; and it is good to know that this year the industry is backing Edinburgh on a far greater scale than previously.)

Other points can be set on the debit side. At most of the major festivals a condition of entry is that the film shall not previously have been shown outside its country of origin. As production schedules, at least in Britain, are not normally arranged with festivals in mind, this may well mean that the overseas distribution of a film has to be delayed if it is entered for a festival; and because of the large amount of capital locked up in a picture, delay in distribution means additional cost to the producer. Furthermore, though it is the practice of festival organisers to pay the basic living expenses of those they invite to attend their celebrations, yet the time so spent by the stars is a loss to their studios, only partially offset by the publicity they may acquire.

Another factor to bear in mind is the prevalence of protective measures in most of the important film markets. What good does it do a producer to gain an award, have his film praised by the critics and his stars accepted by the public, if import restrictions and quotas prevent his film being generally released in the country where it scored its success, or if currency restrictions prevent him from bringing home the money it has earned?

III

This is the picture as it may look to the individual producer; the advantages, as is often the case, are less tangible, less clear-cut. Over the years, it has become clear, however, that festivals serve their major purposes; they set international standards; they provide, more effectively than any other method yet devised, an opportunity to consider the output of the film industries of the world; they bring together people—executives, directors, critics—who can, and should, profitably meet more often than in the usual course of things they do. More important, perhaps, the festivals serve to bring to wider public notice the work of directors operating outside the normal commercial framework (recent cases include *Crin Blanc*, *The Stranger Left No Card*, *The Pleasure Garden* and the American *The Little Fugitive*), new styles of film-making (the Italian neo-realist films, never widely popular in their own country, have gained something of their initial reputation at festivals), and, even, unfamiliar national schools. The Japanese cinema was introduced to Europe with the victory of *Rashomon* at Venice; the success of the Brazilian *O Cangaceiro* is a lesser case in point. The festivals invaluablely provide a shop-window for the original, the experimental work which may, in the long run, exert

its own influence in revitalising the industry as a whole.

These considerations, it may be argued, concern the critic rather than the producer—or, perhaps, concern the independent producer, who has little to lose and much to gain, rather than the producer working within the commercial organisation. Other factors, though, are involved: national prestige, the reputation of a country's film industry, may well be affected by its showing at festivals. As long as festivals exist, it can well be claimed, public interest, as well as self-interest, demands that they be supported.

IV

In any event, the festivals have become increasingly numerous, and to bring some order into their affairs the International Federation of Film Producers' Associations has recently graded festivals into four categories. In category A are competitive festivals which all Federation members are encouraged to support: at present, these are Cannes and Venice. In category B are non-competitive festivals, such as those held this year at Sao Paulo, Mar del Plata, Berlin and San Sebastian; participation here is optional. Category C applies to festivals of a specialised nature; those, for instance, dealing with realist, scientific or children's films. Finally, in category D are so-called "national" festivals—Locarno is one—in which films are entered through local distributors, and in which the Federation's members can only participate on an individual company basis.

The Federation has also assumed the power of deciding whether or not it will recognise a festival. Provided that member associations obey the rules, this is a step towards limiting the mushroom growth that has bedevilled the festival scene in recent years. This power of recognition provides the Federation with an important weapon for negotiation with governments on questions of protective measures and currency restrictions. At the end of 1953, the Federation's council voted in favour of a rule that all films entered in a festival should be entitled to general distribution in the sponsoring country as extra-quota films, and that their earnings should be remitted to the producer country. This resolution has been honoured by the Argentinian, French and German authorities, in respect of the Mar del Plata, Cannes and Berlin festivals.

V

In considering how Britain itself has used festivals to its own best advantage, it must be admitted that we have not been very adept. The table on the next page demonstrates the decline in British interest and participation. In 1949, most major British films had a showing at either Venice or Cannes, and *The Third Man* won the Cannes Grand Prix. In the last two years, though, entries have been both fewer and less imaginatively selected, while (with the exception of *Moulin Rouge*) the awards gained have been relatively minor. The showing as a whole has scarcely exploited our potential resources, and the list of major films not shown is, in its way, an instructive one. Although producers can doubtless fairly claim that time factors, currency restrictions and other reasons made it unwise or impossible to enter many of these pictures, we must also remember the efforts made by the Italian and French producers to launch their biggest films appropriately at the festivals.

On the social side—and its significance should not be underrated—the British contribution can scarcely be

described as brilliant, and our hospitality has seldom run the risk of being considered excessively lavish. In comparison with France, Italy and the United States, all of whom show a sharp awareness of the publicity value to be gained from the presence of stars and directors at the festivals, Britain has been under-represented. Top-ranking stars and directors, as a rule, apparently consider it more worthwhile to assist in the commercial exploitation of their films in Britain than to put in appearances at these international occasions, whose benefits are less clear-cut, and are assessed principally in terms of prestige.

One reason for our relatively undistinguished showing may be a certain timidity in approach: we are inclined to mistrust festivals, and to misjudge the quality of our own potential contribution. Another reason may be that Britain lacks an organisation comparable to Unifrance or Unitalia, with machinery for reviewing the industry's output as a whole. The British Film Producers' Association (undoubtedly achieving what success it can in a thankless task) circularises its members, and important non-members, with details of forthcoming festivals and asks if they propose to enter any films; but the present reluctance of many producers means, in effect, that the B.F.P.A. is more often in the position of trying to persuade

producers to enter films than of being selective among the entries proposed. Nor indeed, as a trade association, and particularly a film trade association, is the B.F.P.A. in a position to dictate to its members about the films they should submit.

VI

If proof is needed that Britain can organise a successful festival entry, we need only look at the method of selecting and presenting short films. Throughout the year, a permanent committee, under the chairmanship of the President of the Association of Specialised Film Producers, and with representatives from the Foreign Office, British Council, British Film Academy, British Film Institute, the Board of Film Censors and other organisations, assesses each short submitted to it in respect of the various festivals and trade fairs; each festival is considered on its merits, and a balanced entry arranged. In contrast to our disappointing showing in the field of features, British short films have scored notable successes at Venice over the past five years, and have won respect elsewhere. It may be claimed, in fact, that the "festival potential" of every important British short made during these years has been exploited sensibly, and to the full.

BRITAIN AND THE FILM FESTIVALS

Year British Entries at Cannes British Entries at Venice Films not entered at Venice or Cannes

1949	The Passionate Friends Obsession The Third Man* Queen of Spades (Passport to Pimlico, shown outside the competition)	The Blue Lagoon Scott of the Antarctic* The Fool and the Princess The Last Days of Dolwyn* Kind Hearts and Coronets* The Elusive Pimpernel	Whisky Galore Passport to Pimlico The Small Back Room
1950	NO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL	The Blue Lamp The Dancing Years Seven Days to Noon Give Us This Day* Gone To Earth* Morning Departure State Secret	Chance of a Lifetime The Happiest Days of Your Life
1951	The Browning Version* Tales of Hoffmann*	Lavender Hill Mob* Murder in the Cathedral* No Resting Place White Corridors	The Man in the White Suit Outcast of the Islands The Magic Garden
1952	Encore Cry the Beloved Country	The Importance of Being Earnest* Mandy* The Brave Don't Cry	The African Queen The Card Brandy for the Parson The Sound Barrier
1953	Heart of the Matter	Moulin Rouge*	Conquest of Everest Genevieve The Cruel Sea† A Queen is Crowned The Square Ring

* Award Winner.

1949 : 4 awards. At CANNES : The Third Man (*Grand Prix*). At VENICE : Scott of the Antarctic (*Honourable Mention*), The Last Days of Dolwyn (*International Prize for best music*), Kind Hearts and Coronets (*International Prize for best art direction*).

1950 : VENICE only : 2 Awards : Give Us This Day (*Italian Critics Award*), Gone to Earth (*International Prize for best music*).

1951 : 4 Awards : At CANNES : The Browning Version (*Awards for best actor and for best screenplay*), Tales of Hoffmann (*Technical prize and special award for most original screen conception*). At VENICE : Lavender Hill Mob (*International prize for best scenario*), Murder in the Cathedral (*International prize for best art direction*).

1952 : 2 Awards : At VENICE : The Importance of Being Earnest (*International prize for best design*), Mandy (*Special award for most original treatment of a documentary subject*).

1953 : 1 Award : At VENICE : Moulin Rouge (*Silver Lion of St. Mark*).

† It is understood that this film was withheld from entry because its content might have offended international susceptibilities.



Jean Renoir, with Dana Andrews and Anne Baxter, during the making of "Swamp Water."

RENOIR IN AMERICA

Jacques Rivette and François Truffaut

This article has been translated and abridged from an "Entretien avec Jean Renoir," the first part of which appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* for April, 1954. We are most grateful to the editors for permission to reprint it. The "Entretien" covered Renoir's work from 1939 (*La Règle du Jeu*) to 1947 (*The Woman on the Beach*), and was recorded on tape.

In 1939, Jean Renoir finished *La Règle du Jeu*, and then went to Italy to lecture on film direction at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome and work on an adaptation of the opera *La Tosca*. He finished the script, in collaboration with Karl Koch, and a few days after shooting began, Italy entered the war. Renoir went to America and Koch directed *La Tosca*.

In Hollywood, Renoir made five films: *Swamp Water* (1941), *This Land is Mine* (1943), *The Southerner* (1945), *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1946), and *The Woman on the Beach* (1947), after which, with the project of *The River* in mind, he paid his first visit to India. In 1944, in America, he also worked on an Office of War Information film, *Salute to France*.

I EXPECT many people have told you how studios are run in the States. I have nothing new to say, as my own experiences were not so different from others'. I can, though, divide my work into two parts and make a distinction between what I attempted in the large studios, and the experiments with independent ones. The results of the former weren't bad; *Swamp Water*, for instance, is not a bad film—at any rate it's a very pleasant film. But I was only able to make it because I was a neophyte, and there was the further advantage that I spoke poor English, and, when I didn't understand, couldn't be easily influenced.

Everything that has been said about the large studios is more or less true, although one major complicating factor for a man like me—someone who improvises—has, I think, been ignored. On account of the exceedingly high cost of film-making, the studios cannot risk their money without what they call security. Security consists of the script, the work-plan: and every detail must be fixed beforehand by a sort of administrative council, consisting of the studio chiefs, producer and director. If a director

can talk well, he can usually get his own way so long as he forecasts precisely what that will be. This is something I cannot do. It invariably happens to me, that I persuade people to do a thing one way and then, on the floor, decide it was an extremely silly way and want to do it quite differently. In other words, what has been said of the tyranny of the large studios is sometimes true, but it depends upon individuals. Personally, I should have worked there without being in the least bit tyrannised, in fact most amiably, if I had the gift of foreseeing just what I wanted to do on the floor. But I haven't.

When I decided to leave 20th Century-Fox after *Swamp Water*, it was arranged in a most friendly fashion. I explained what I've just told you to Zanuck and he said: "No. It isn't possible. We have to know where we're going. Sorry." I said: "All right. Let's break my contract." "Sure." We remain the best of friends. But I think that my kind of work cannot fit in with a big administration. Indeed, I think it is going to disappear, and not only from Hollywood. Films cost too much, the expenses are insane, and I am sure that people like me—

they must, of course, go on making films—will have to work more cheaply in future, say, in black-and-white, and even on 16 mm.

Swamp Water

Did you yourself propose the script of Swamp Water?

No. Dudley Nichols wrote it about a year previously in a different form. At the time Nichols had left Hollywood and was in Connecticut, writing, but not for the screen. When I arrived, Fox gave me heaps of scripts to read. All of them were, for my taste, too imitative of European stories. I haven't yet lost my conviction that it is extremely difficult to make films in which the action doesn't take place in the country where you are making them. An artist's origins don't much matter, but. . . . I often make an analogy with the French school of painting, undoubtedly as important an event in the world as the Italian Renaissance: it contains men of many different countries, but they all paint in the French tradition, and their work springs from French soil. Picasso may be Spanish but he is a French artist: even if he had been born in China he would have become one.

Seeing that I was French, Fox offered me stories of France and Europe. They said to themselves: "*Here is a man familiar with France and Europe. He will do remarkable things.*" But I didn't want to. Eventually I came across this essentially American story, and was enchanted with it. Dudley Nichols has remained a rare friend, a brother, since we made this picture.

Swamp Water also showed me America. The story takes place in Georgia, so I asked the studio executives: "*When do we leave for Georgia?*" They were astonished, and replied: "*Do you think we spent millions of dollars on this studio, where we can reproduce anything, just to set out for Georgia? We shall make Georgia here.*" I protested vehemently. Zanuck was perplexed when he heard about it. He said: "*Really, these Frenchmen have*

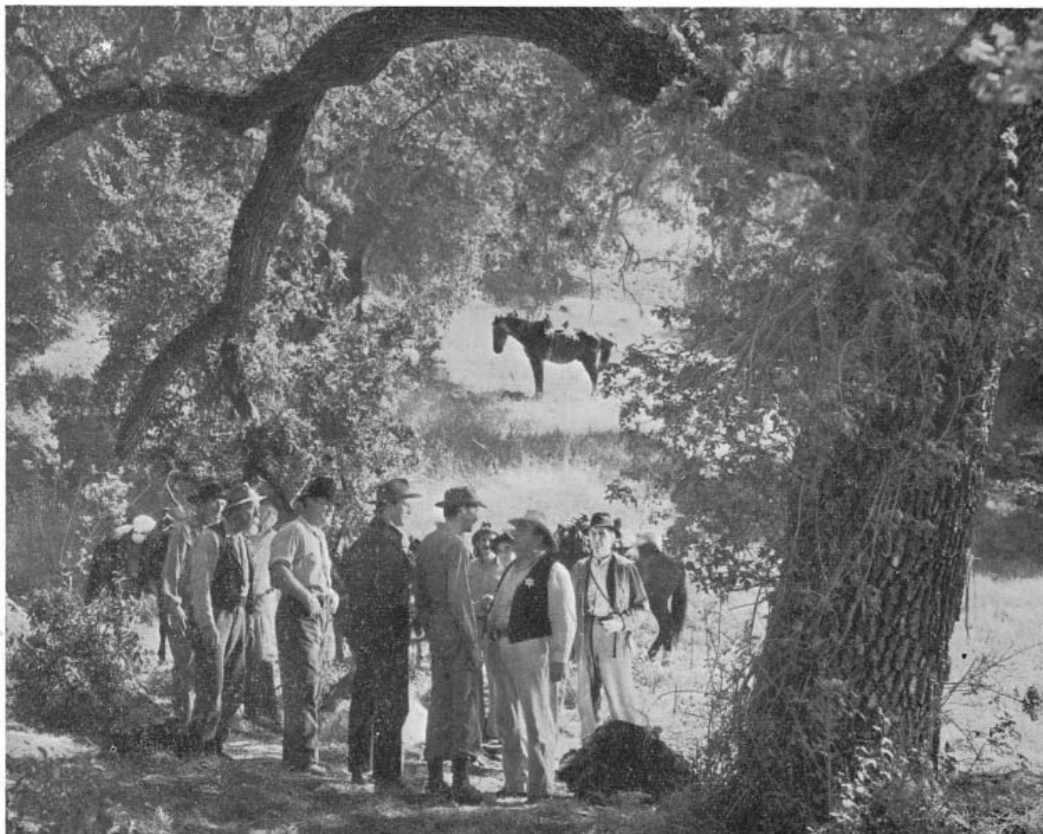
some odd ideas." I confessed that I had odd ideas, but had to tell him I preferred doing nothing to making this film in the studio: "*It seems to me that we shall find some exteriors in Georgia. I don't say that we can't shoot the interiors here, and even a few exteriors that are not very typical. The front of a house, good heavens, why not build it in the studio? But everything which expresses Georgia and its landscape, I want to shoot there.*" Then we went to Georgia, and I got to know the countryside, and I must say it was very pleasant, and I was well entertained.

This film took longer than was foreseen. I should have finished shooting in . . . I don't know . . . 40 days, and after 45 we were far from the end. I had a very slow cameraman, but it was not his fault. One day he was severely reproached for the delay, and I protested: "*Listen. He is not to blame. It is I who am slow. I am a slow director. If you don't want a slow director, don't employ me.*" The cameraman became a dear friend: he liked my attitude.* The difficulty was that I had refused a story taken from a well-known book, and I had refused a star. Certainly I had some good actors; Walter Huston, Dana Andrews and Anne Baxter had come from stock companies; Walter Brennan had won an Academy Award and was widely known; but they played character parts, and at that time the hierarchy of stars was very severe in Hollywood. The cost of a film had to correspond with the drawing-power of its star. My film fell automatically into the cheapest category. So the studio chiefs were disturbed when they saw a non-star picture costing so much. They told me to stop shooting. I stopped and went home. The same night Zanuck 'phoned and said: "*No, no, Jean, it's a gamble, of course, but I'll take the responsibility, and I've explained to the studio heads that you'll continue in spite of the extra costs.*"

When I went to work the next morning I was the object of a demonstration which deeply moved me, and showed

* Peverell Marley.

Renoir insisted on going to Georgia . . . a scene from "*Swamp Water.*"





"The Southerner": Zachary Scott.

that film people are the same everywhere and understand each other very well. Entering the studio at 9 a.m., I found everyone on the set, electricians who should have been at their lights, cameramen, actors, and extras standing very formally, just as though I were visiting the President at the Elysée Palace, and when I came in they cheered. There was a great deal of noise; then they all went back to work. It was most delightful. . . .

Swamp Water was a great success in the United States?

Yes. Zanuck has often said so since. In that year's programme there were five or six films made with big stars and millions of dollars, and *Swamp Water* made much more money than any of them, so they were pleased with it. Nevertheless, I left Fox.

Deanna Durbin and Saint-Exupéry

We heard that you once began a film with Deanna Durbin. . . ?

Yes, on leaving Fox, Universal asked me to make that film. I met Deanna Durbin and liked her very much. She is a charming girl, and was then, in the stage between girlhood and womanhood, just married, and particularly ravishing. I was very excited. But I didn't finish the film because Deanna Durbin was unable to escape from the style that had made her famous. I admired the style, invented by Henry Koster, who as a scriptwriter had first conceived the idea of that charming film *Three Smart Girls*. I had all the Durbin pictures run through for me, and those made by Koster were certainly the best. However, I had no gift for that style and the film was, quite rightly, finished by people who knew the job better than I. . . .

After that, I wanted to make *Terre des Hommes*. I had kept records of discussions with Saint-Exupéry, mostly on the literary aspects. We wanted to make this film and we had worked out, if not a script, at least an approach. Finally we discovered a style, a formula for *Terre des Hommes*, but having got so far, I could find no one who was interested, despite the success of the book in America. I should tell you that a considerable change has taken place since then. When I first went to Hollywood, exteriors

were reconstructed in the studio. The idea of shooting on location only won acceptance during the war, and when I wanted to make *Terre des Hommes* the studio period was at its height. But that film had to be shot in the places described in the book, and I think that was the main reason that discouraged people.

This Land is Mine

Then you undertook This Land is Mine as an independent production?

An independent production distributed by R.K.O. Although the word "independent" is only one of numerous terms used to describe fifty different ways of making films in Hollywood. This film was independent in so far as the studio left Nichols and me in complete peace, but it was financed and distributed by R.K.O. and we were responsible to them for both costs and box-office returns.

During that period R.K.O. was run by an extraordinary man, Charlie Korner. I deeply regretted his unfortunate death. Had he not died, I believe I should have made twenty films for R.K.O.; I would have worked all my life at R.K.O. He was a man who knew the business and the exploitation of the cinema, but at the same time conceded that one must experiment. Indeed, his predecessors were also extraordinary men; they had allowed productions like *Citizen Kane*, which could have been made in no other studio. R.K.O. certainly was the centre of real cinema in Hollywood during those years up to the death of Korner, in 1946. He died while I was making *Woman on the Beach*, which was finished under only nominal supervision from the studio.

You worked on This Land is Mine in close collaboration with Nichols?

Very close. We locked ourselves in a small room, Nichols, my wife and I, and composed the whole thing together. Nichols was not interested in *mise en scène* then, that was my affair, although he afterwards became interested. At that period he didn't want to become involved with the actual shooting, and so on the set I was alone; but we worked together on everything concerning the script, as well as in discussions with the art directors. Actually, as art director, I had brought Lourié with me from France.*

We noticed that the style of this film was different from that of your other American productions.

With more cross-cutting perhaps, and fewer scenes shot in one take? Yes, I agree, it's an odd film, and in talking of it one should remember the time it was made—a time when many Americans were influenced by propaganda which attempted to show that France was a country of collaborators. I made the film, which was mistakenly distributed in France, specifically for Americans, to suggest that day-to-day life in an occupied country was not so easy as some of them thought. I can say that the results were remarkable, and I am proud of it. Not only did the film have a good run, but I received letters of approval and numerous expressions of affection and respect for France. I think the film achieved its object.

Nevertheless, it contained propaganda—I have a horror of that word, but all the same—because it had to convince people of something, and I felt it necessary to be more prudent than usual and allow for changes at the editing stage. Normally I am very confident on the set. I like to take risks. That is one of the grounds for my divorce from the large studios, since their policy allows no risks at all. But if I know that I have to throw myself into

* Lourié was art director on *La Règle du Jeu*.

the water and will drown if I don't get out, and if I know that I can't extricate myself by trickery in the cutting room, I have the impression that the scene will be shot better. In the large studios one must be sure of satisfying the customer, and because of this, one needs shots and reverse shots and group shots and medium shots in order to be able, with a few retakes, to remake another film out of them if that one won't fit together in the editing. I've never done that, but I did for *This Land is Mine* because there was so much at stake, I felt a little responsible. . . . I really conceived and broke it down like a commercial picture, allowing for many changes, and testing at previews the reactions of the public I hoped to convince.

We felt that This Land is Mine was reminiscent of Daudet's Contes du Lundi, and of La Dernière Classe in particular.

I had them in mind. My first idea, when I left France, was to make a film about an exodus of children from Paris to the South; actually I was thinking of *Jeux Interdits*, but without the story of the graveyard, of course. Then I realised that it would be no good using foreign children; French children must play like French children. This film had to be made by established actors who could convey artistically—that is to say artificially—certain emotions to the American public. I discussed this often with Charles Laughton, one of my close friends, and it was while recounting one of Daudet's stories that I had the idea for the story I wrote. . . .

Independent Production: The Southerner

So we come to The Southerner, which marks, I suppose, the beginning of the independent productions.

Yes. Robert Hakim gave me the idea for that. One day he brought me a script which was not really very good—it was really a scenario for one of the big studios—and said: "*I want this to be a low-budget production.*" It would have cost a great deal, but there were some striking things in the story, and I asked for the book. It was a delightful collection of short stories, by a man called Sessions Perry, about Texas and characters like those in *The Southerner*. There was enough material there for several films. I told Hakim that I would be interested on condition that I could write a new script. It happened that Hakim had shown it already to David Loew; and that was how I became a friend of this exceptional man. He is an outstanding person—most courageous. I wrote the script, which pleased him, and he said: "*O.K. Go ahead.*" I warned him that I should improvise on the set. "*Good.*" I asked him to join me there, so that we could discuss the alterations as I made them. He said: "*That interests me greatly.*" He completely understood the way I work.

When this script was shown to the two stars of the film, who were used to extremely different material, they were rather put out. They used to adore me, flatter me, and say: "*Ah! Jean is the best director in the world,*" etc., but when I produced this script, compliments turned to criticism and they said: "*We don't have to make a film like that, we refuse to do it.*" So David Loew told them: "*All right. You refuse. I don't care. Jean and I will choose some actors.*" And we selected some unknown actors, which was the beginning of a complete adventure. The film was to be distributed by United Artists, but they told David Loew: "*We cannot distribute it because you promised us a film with stars. There*

aren't any. So you will have to look after it yourselves." David Loew told them: "*All right. I have considerable interests in about thirty pictures that you are distributing; I am going to give them all to Columbia.*" Then United Artists said: "*Very well, we'll take The Southerner.*"

It was a film that I made with complete freedom, and, I think you will agree, it was an ambitious film. Several pictures of that style have been made in France, and are still being made, but not in Hollywood. In wartime, Hollywood had to obey the tacit instruction to glorify America. The film was not shown in Europe, at least not until much later in France, and then only by chance. United Artists disliked it, and handled its distribution very badly, having been coerced into taking it. Even so it made money in the end. I know, because I had a share in the profits, and I saw the money. The film belonged to David Loew and me, and now we are going to put it out on television.

"A citizen of the cinema"

Perhaps we're wrong, but it seems to us that The Southerner marks the beginning of a new trend in your conception of cinema.

No, you're extremely right. The reason is simple: it was the end of the war. The Liberation occurred while I was making *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, which was begun a few weeks after *The Southerner*. My ideas changed immediately. The war is often considered—simply as a war; but it is more than that, it is a revolution, an uncontrolled reshaping of the world. I think people are going to discover that they are grouped according to their civilisations rather than their nationalities. I don't mean that nations will disappear; they existed, in fact they were more numerous, in the Middle Ages. There were Florence, Pisa and Ravenna instead of Italy; but the citizens of those states felt themselves to be, above all, members of one civilisation, the Christian civilisation of the West. They were Roman Christians, representing



"*The Diary of a Chambermaid*": Paulette Goddard and Francis Lederer, the chambermaid and the butler.

certain ideas which followed on from the ideas of the Greeks, modified by Roman administration, modified by the Christian revolution, modified again by the beginning of the Middle Ages and the reforms introduced by the Church. In the Middle Ages, divisions of nationality were weaker than those of property, profession or intellectual affinity. Evidently a lettered man, a gentleman whose profession was study, the pursuit of learning, was not an Italian or a French intellectual, but an intellectual belonging to the larger Western civilisation; and he was as much at his ease in the universities of Bologna or Caen as he was at Oxford. . . .

I feel that a re-orientation of this sort awaits us, and, for my part, I thoroughly approve of it. It doesn't prevent me from believing even more strongly in local influences than in national allegiances. I consider it a mistake, for instance, in making a film that takes place in Paris, to shoot it in Provence because the climate there is better. Films about Provence must be made in Provence, and films about Paris—in Paris. I repeat—and we have proof of it, even after the Middle Ages—that an artist's origins are of secondary importance. The soil is so strong that it creates its own system of naturalisation, not in the course of years, but in a matter of weeks. Benvenuto Cellini working at Fontainebleau, or Leonardo da Vinci, obviously remained Italians, remained themselves. Nevertheless, there is evidence in their works commissioned by the king of France of something that makes those works French. I think we shall rediscover this sort of internationalism, at any rate in certain crafts. One might claim that it has never been lost, for all that has been said, in many of them, and that the motives which tended to separate men from each other were arbitrary ones.

Now, I don't know whether it is to be deplored or not. Personally, I would feel more at ease in a world divided in the way I suggest, although probably I am alone in saying so at this moment. Nationalism has seldom been so strident. . . . But I see in all this the signs of a dying order, and I feel that we shall find—not One World, as Mr. Wilkie described, but in any case worlds larger, vaster than those whose frontiers were so rigidly limited in our youth.

If we think in these terms, if we think eventually of a citizen of the cinema, rather than a citizen of such and such a nation, our approach to the cinema will change. As a result of wider international distribution, we shall have a better cinema. The negative costs will be paid for, not by a big crowd in one place, but by little crowds in many places. And I strongly hope so, because I am convinced that the art of the cinema is a secret one, more secret than the other arts. It is not true that the cinema is for the 6,000 people at Gaumont-Palace; it is for three out of that 6,000. I have a word for lovers of the cinema: it is *aficionados*. I remember going to a bull-fight long ago. I knew nothing about bull-fights, but the people with me did and enjoyed it enormously. They went into transports of joy when the matador made a tiny movement to the right. Then he made another little movement, also to the right, which I thought was identical, and they booed him. But it was I who was in the wrong. I should not have gone to a bull-fight without knowing the rules. One ought always to know the rules of the game. . . .

You must have heard about Barnes. His theory was simple enough. The qualities, talent and education which make a painter are the same as those which make a lover of painting; in other words, to appreciate a picture, one must be a potential artist. And honestly to enjoy a film, you must be a potential *cinéaste*. You must say to yourself, "but I should have done it like this, or like that."

One must make films oneself, if only in the imagination, to be worthy of entering a cinema. . . .

Diary of a Chambermaid

Your next film, Diary of a Chambermaid, was not well received in France. . . .

Very badly.

We like it very much, perhaps even more than La Règle du Jeu.

I, too, am very proud of it. You know what I'm going to ask you? Let's meet one day and write a note to Paulette Goddard. It would make her happy because she shares your opinion, and is fond of that film.

It was an old project . . .

A very old one; although entirely altered, as I made it at the beginning of the period when I conceived scenes in a more concentrated, theatrical form, with less cross-cutting. I saw them, rather, as little bunches, clusters. . . . The original idea dated from silent days and had been conceived then in a very romantic fashion, very *Nana* . . .

The office scenes in Nana in fact . . .

You know, latent within each of us is the work that we will do in time, and yet it changes continually. Obviously we don't know what we will do tomorrow, but probably an outsider, more cunning than ourselves, would see it in us, since it exists potentially. Anyhow, I rescued this idea, for the sole reason that I thought Paulette Goddard would do well as Celestine, and I was anxious to make a film with her.

It was an independent production. Burgess Meredith, some friends and I formed a small group; Benedict Bogeaus found the money. He owned an independent studio run on the same lines as French studios. An individual producer rents the site, without even sound facilities. We rented sound from Western Electric. This studio is a delightful old place called General Service. Bogeaus had some relations who advanced him a small sum, and he was able to borrow the rest from the banks. So this film, too, I made in complete freedom, improvising much of it.

It was widely rumoured in France, some years ago: "Jean Renoir was unable to do what he wanted, they made fun of him. . . ."

Not at all. Good or bad, I was entirely responsible. Of course, I may have been influenced. I suffer more than anyone from other people's advice. They say to you "*Perhaps you were wrong there, why did you do it?*" And then, good heavens, you think: "*They may well be right,*" and don't trust yourself. You may suffer from good or bad influences, but that is true of any film. Even if you make it with your own money, with no concessions whatsoever to outside interests, like Chaplin, you still suffer. But I want to make it clear that I always did what I wanted in Hollywood, and, if I made mistakes there, I would have made the same mistakes in Paris.

We thought that the final lynching scene was a complete improvisation on the set.

Obviously, yes. It wasn't included in the script; but it was not the only scene, there were many like that.

You were trying, it seems, to build up to a special kind of intensity in this film. You wanted, as they say, to go the whole way.

Certainly. And I was interested in making such a film with an actress who had not previously played that sort of rôle. She was a good friend, and it was fascinating to work with her in that way. I also was very keen to introduce some scenes which were almost sketches, not to develop them, just to present them as simply as possible, to keep to the bare outlines.

Robert Ryan and Joan Bennett in
"The Woman on the Beach,"
Renoir's last American film.



Woman on the Beach: Preview at Santa Barbara

Is it true that you encountered some difficulties over your next film, Woman on the Beach?

That was quite an adventure. Joan Bennett, who is a friend of mine, asked me to make it. She said: "I've been invited to do a film for R.K.O. Come and make it with me." R.K.O. seconded the offer, and I was pleased to go back to them—I'd been very happy there before. Originally, Val Lewton was going to produce the film. He was a most interesting person, and it was very tragic that he died some years ago. If not the first, he was certainly one of the first to make fairly ambitious films cheaply; that is, on "B" picture budgets, although with good scripts and stories out of the ordinary run. Don't think I despise "B" pictures; in principle I prefer them to the big, pretentious psychological films—they are more amusing. When I happen to go to the cinema in America, I go to see "B" pictures. In the first place, they are a great technical achievement. To make a Western in a week as Monogram do, beginning on Monday and ending on Saturday, takes a good deal of skill, believe me. The crime stories are made at the same speed. Secondly, I consider that they are often better than the important pictures, because the director has complete freedom—working at that rate, no one has time to supervise him.

... Val Lewton kindly helped me to begin *Woman on the Beach*, and then went back to his other projects, which no doubt interested him more, and left me to myself. I was more or less my own producer, in association with a man named Gross, who kept strictly to the business side. In fact, I was wholly responsible, and I've never shot a film with less script and more improvisation. I took the opportunity of attempting something I had long wanted to do: a film based on what, today, is called sex—perhaps it was called sex then, but people didn't talk so much about it—seen from a purely physical point of view. I tried to tell a story of physical attraction into which sentiment did not enter. I made it, and was pleased with it; the film was perhaps a little slow, but the scenes were well balanced and excellently played by Robert Ryan—this was his first important part—and by Joan Bennett.

The studio, the actors and I were all pleased with this film, but we had some doubts about the public reaction, so we agreed to have several previews. I remember one in particular, at Santa Barbara before an audience of college kids. They didn't like the film, they weren't interested, and I had an impression that my method of showing emotional scenes devoid of emotion shocked them—or perhaps it wasn't what they were used to. In any case, it was a poor reception and we returned to the studio very disheartened.

You know, a preview is an unbearable ordeal. You sit down and feel as though your body was being pierced by blows from a knife. I was so discouraged that I was the first to suggest cuts and alterations. The film had been expensive to make, as to arrive at the style I wanted I had to work slowly; and Joan Bennett had succeeded in completely altering her personality for the part—I even asked her to lower her voice, which was rather sharp. All of that took time. This time, it was I who feared a financial catastrophe, for which I would have felt responsible. The studio authorities were most considerate, and said: "All right, we shall have to make changes, but you must do it." ... I felt then that I had no right to take complete responsibility for launching the film on the public, and I believe that moment of doubt did no good to the picture.

I carefully re-shot numerous scenes, altogether about a third of the film, including mostly the scenes between Robert Ryan and Joan Bennett; and I produced a film which was, I think, neither one thing nor the other, and which had certainly lost its *raison d'être*. I had allowed myself to be too greatly influenced by the Santa Barbara preview, and, at the thought of losing contact with the public, I had flinched. All the same, people who criticise this film should not consider the things that influenced me. I was myself responsible for the alterations.

Actually, I believe that I was attempting something which would have been successful now; today, in America, audiences are more ready to accept the ideas of *Woman on the Beach*, and I am afraid that my film was premature, and anticipated the present state of mind.

TOLSTOY ON FILM

Jay Leyda

IT is fortunately possible to document and to date each foot of film photographed of Lev Tolstoy. All this footage was shot during the last two years of Tolstoy's life (coinciding with the first two years of a Russian film industry), by a single enterprising Russian producer, employing himself and one other technician as cameramen. In his last years in San Francisco, Alexander Drankov recorded his memories of these profitable encounters with his greatest subject. When we fit these memories into those of Tolstoy's family, especially those written by his watchful daughter Alexandra, we find an unexpectedly complete record of Tolstoy on film—along with his several comments on the new medium. Because this record is so entwined with Tolstoy's domestic crisis of these last years, it may be useful to show it to the reader in its entirety.

Alexander Drankov's first victory over Tolstoy's hatred of all photographers was on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Drankov's aide, then and later, was none other than Tolstoy's wife, Sophia Andreyevna, who had her own reasons for giving her encouragement. In *The Tragedy of Tolstoy*, their daughter Alexandra tells of the birthday celebrations on August 28th, 1908:

"The precursors of every memorable event—the photographers—began to make their appearance at our house. I remember father sitting, exhausted, on the porch with his ailing leg stretched out, and mother coming in to ask him to consent to being photographed for the moving pictures. He made a grimace of pain and started to refuse, but the cameramen swore that they were not going to disturb him and would not ask him to pose. They tried to photograph him from the lawn and from the verandah, while father sat motionless, looking before him with a melancholy stare."

The five metres of angry old man that Drankov captured on film did excellent business. Since Tolstoy's excommunication from the Orthodox Church in 1901 for his subversive teaching, he had become the centre of controversy. His appearance on the screen provoked a furore. This "wild beast in a zoo" glaring at the audience couldn't possibly be Tolstoy, sympathetic papers protested—"We have been deceived by some made-up actor." Hostile papers were equally violent—one almost suspects the hand of a modern publicity agent—but all were silenced when the waiting Drankov finally and proudly displayed his proof, a statement from Sophia Andreyevna Tolstaya, insisting that the film of her husband be shown, "only on such programmes as are exclusively concerned with scientific and educational material." If she made this request seriously, it was at best a gesture; the Tolstoy family had no means of checking Drankov's sales, and Drankov was in business.

In 1909, as Tolstoy's life seemed to be nearing its end, the Press devoted considerable space to his activities and pronouncements, in preparation for his posthumous sanctification—and Sophia Andreyevna placed herself well in the foreground of all this publicity. Drankov could not remain insensible to the pleasant fact that he was the only film producer to have a toe in the Tolstoy door. It was inevitable that Tolstoy should be made a film figure,

whether or not he relished the idea—so long as Sophia Andreyevna saw an advantage in it:

"On September 3, 1909, father, Dushan Petrovich [Makovitzky], Ilya Vasilyevich, and I went to visit the Chertkovs . . . at Kriokshino. Father wanted to see Vladimir Grigoryevich and to rest awhile from the life of Yasnaya Polyana. But people dogged his every step. Several days before our departure, a moving picture company [Drankov] requested permission to photograph his departure from Yasnaya Polyana. Mother liked being photographed and made no objections, but for father it was annoying.

"What for?" he said. "It's so disagreeable, so embarrassing! Couldn't we arrange it so that they would not come?" . . . Aunt Maria Nikolayevna, who was visiting us just then, supported father so energetically that mother had to give in. I sent a telegram in father's name, asking them not to come. But to our amazement and indignation, on the eve of our departure, the cameramen nevertheless made their appearance. [Had they received another telegram from Sophia Andreyevna?]

"You ask my consent to be photographed," father said to them, making an effort to control his irritation. "I cannot give this consent. And if you do without permission—"

"Our company would never permit itself to do that!" one of the men [Kozlovsky] replied.

Next morning, as we drove to the station, the photographers were waiting for us at the gates of the estate. We reached the station just ahead of them. The railroad gendarme forbade their photographing on the railway premises, but they telephoned to the authorities at Tula and received the necessary permit. Again their cameras buzzed."

It was Drankov who defied the station authorities and it was he who followed the Tolstoy party to Kriokshino. He knew how many unsuccessful attempts had been made by foreign firms to obtain interesting shots of Tolstoy; anything he could catch would be given world distribution. Taking his Pathé camera and a suitcase of film, he quietly moved into a village near Kriokshino—and rented a room from the driver employed by Chertkov to take care of the Tolstoys! This private spy brought him information of Tolstoy's movements, and a few days later told Drankov, "You can catch Lev Nikolayevich every morning at five o'clock! He goes walking, alone, before breakfast."

Next morning Drankov arrived (at four o'clock) at the edge of the woods. No sign of Tolstoy at five, but at about 5.30 Drankov saw the great figure approaching, stick in hand, and head down. Drankov says that he could have filmed Tolstoy without being noticed, but for a variety of reasons ("I felt guilty") he decided to ask permission—"Allow me to film you for the cinematograph." Tolstoy implied consent with the curious phrase, "I am at liberty," and Drankov ran back to pick up the heavy apparatus. In his haste he did not set the tripod securely, and the whole apparatus fell to the ground—scattering ruined film from the opened film-magazine. Tolstoy came over to the stunned Drankov and asked, "What has happened?" Drankov, almost in tears, began the whole tale of his woe, "For five years I've been trying

¹ Alexandra Tolstaya, *The Tragedy of Tolstoy*.

to film you, I've tried so often, and now—" Tolstoy was more practical, "There's a blacksmith three or four versts from here, where you can get your camera repaired. We can arrange a filming at some other time."

The blacksmith was a good one, the lens was not injured, and Drankov innocently presented himself at the Chertkov house the following day, now that he had Tolstoy's personal permission. But Chertkov paid no attention to this claim, and drove him from the estate "as if I had been a scabby dog." Sophia Andreyevna had suffered a slight injury to her leg and could give him no support, so Drankov retreated to his observation post, waiting to catch the party at the Kriokshino railway station. His spy eventually reported "Sophia Andreyevna is better—they're leaving today."

"Chertkov and mother willingly informed everybody of the day of father's departure from Kriokshino; and when we came to the railway station, moving picture men and photographers were waiting in readiness and cameras clicked. . . ."²

Drankov was finally successful. He obtained good shots of each of the Tolstoy family as they crossed the platform to the train—and when Lev Nikolayevich saw Drankov at work, he smiled broadly at the camera as he boarded the train. This smile renewed Drankov's courage; when the party entered their compartment, he followed them. The few words he exchanged with Tolstoy were more than worth all his trouble. Tolstoy greeted him and asked, "Well, are you happy now?" "Oh, yes, Lev Nikolayevich, very happy—I know what these films will mean to the people who see them. If they turn out well, I'd like to bring them to you and show them to you." It was agreed that this could be arranged. When the train reached Moscow, Drankov joyfully exploited his new film monopoly on Tolstoy's face: he hired a drozhzsky, and jumped out every three blocks to film the Tolstoy family as they walked along the Moscow streets.

"[In Moscow] Father was cheerful and in good spirits. In spite of the multitude of people, he had rested up at Kriokshino. I believe it was Maklakov who suggested going to the theatre. . . . But the Bolshoi theatre was closed for the summer. We went to a movie on the Arbat. The audience recognised father at once, whispered and craned their necks. It was stuffy, and a stupid piece was on the screen.

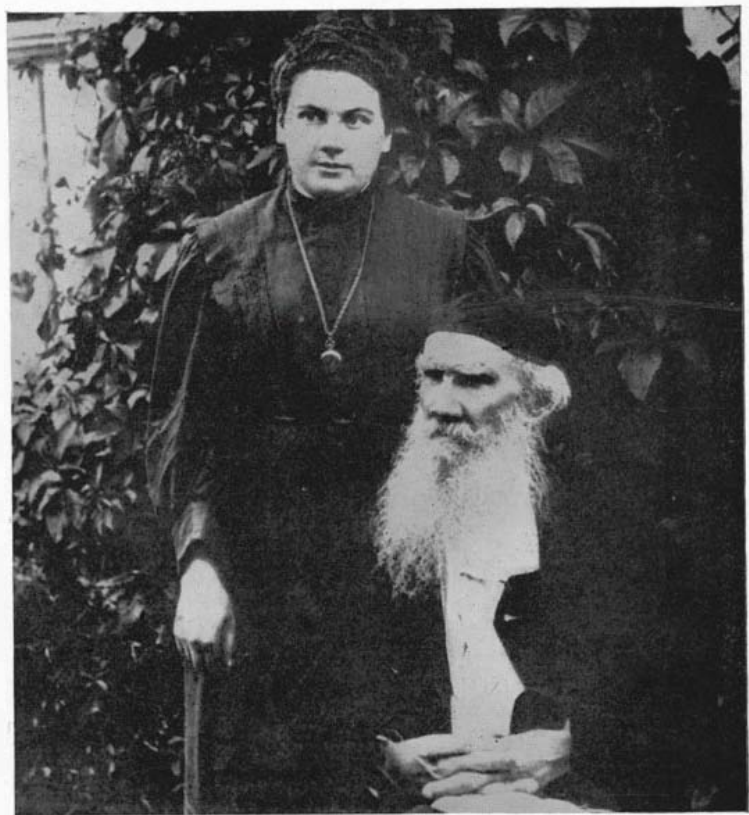
'What a pity,' father said, 'the film might be one of the mightiest means of spreading knowledge and great ideas, and yet it only serves to litter people's brains. And geography! How fine it would be to use the movies for the study of peoples and countries!'

We left the picture early and went home."³

On January 6th, 1910, Drankov brought to Yasnaya Polyana cameras and projection apparatus, and all the films he had taken of Tolstoy to show to the old man—and to a full audience of village peasants whom Tolstoy had invited to the show. Although Tolstoy had seen at least one film previously, he was amazed to see his own life-like image on the screen. Afterwards, in conversation with Drankov (with the peasants still present), Tolstoy learned something from him about the film situation in Russia, and (according to Drankov's subsequent publicity) expressed this opinion: "It is necessary for the cinematograph to record Russian reality in all its many-sided

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* In Sophia Tolstaya's diary, published as *The Final Struggle*, this visit is recorded: "After nine in the evening he went with a whole group to a cinema in Arbat Street. He had never seen one before."



Tolstoy with his daughter; a photograph taken in about 1907.

development. Russian life must be shown as it is by the cinema; instead of continuing to chase after fabricated subjects."

At this, Lev Nikolayevich's daughter, Tatyana Lvovna [Sukhotina], remarked that ancient Russian costumes are preserved in Tula province and that these might be recorded in a film. She suggested to Drankov that he come to her estate, where she promised to arrange a series of interesting scenes from peasant life.

"Yes, yes," resumed Lev Nikolayevich, "Tanya speaks the truth, listen to her advice: this would be very interesting because our peasants' life itself is very vivid and instructive." While speaking, he had opened his book, *The Russian Peasant*, and, pointing to its illustrations (by N. V. Orlov), said, "You see how much work is here for the photographer!"⁴

Drankov spoke about writing for films, but Tolstoy showed no interest. In her diary entry for the day (quoted in *The Final Struggle*), Sophia Tolstaya recorded: "Today has been entirely devoted to the cinematographer. Drankov took a film of us all, and in the evening showed our journey with Lev Nikolayevich to Chertkov at Kriokshino, and then in Moscow with the crowd at Kursk station." Next day, another showing was arranged for

⁴ An item in *Russkoye Slovo* of January 9th, 1910. On the next day Drankov wrote this sly letter to Sophia Andreyevna: "I take no responsibility for the diffuse paragraph in *Russkoye Slovo*, for I had no idea that the couple of words I said to a friend working on the paper would be transformed into such an article. I am once more convinced that your remarks about newspapers are the holy truth." This and subsequent Drankov letters were found in the Tolstoy archives by V. Vishnevsky and published in his article, "The Legend of L. N. Tolstoy's Film Scenario," *Iskusstvo Kino*, November, 1940.

some of the peasants who had not been able to come the day before.

Tolstoy's opposition to films was further softened by a visit, on April 21st, 1910, from Leonid Andreyev:

"At tea he talked to Lev Nikolayevich about the critic K. Chukovsky, who had raised the question of a special dramatic literature for the cinematograph. Andreyev was very enthusiastic about this. Lev Nikolayevich listened at first sceptically, but later became interested. 'I shall most certainly write for the cinematograph,' he announced at the end of the conversation."⁵

There is in *The Final Struggle* a letter from Tolstoy to his wife, dated June 18th, 1910:

"When I got home, doctors had come from Troitzky, three versts off, to invite me to a performance and a cinema show there. Troitzky is the district hospital for the most serious cases of mental derangement, and they have a thousand patients. . . ."

Alexandra accompanied her father to Troitzky:

"A couple of times father went to the moving pictures which were arranged for the patients. The hall was dark and some foolish melodrama was on the screen; father's white blouse and beard gleamed faintly in the darkness. I was conscious of the hall being filled with madmen and had a strong desire to get out as quickly as I could, but father calmly exchanged remarks with Chertkov, and apparently it never occurred to him that there was anything to fear in the place."

II

His interest possibly revived by reports of the Tolstoy-Andreyev conversation, Drankov wrote to Mme. Sukhotina to remind her of an invitation made six months before, when she had "deigned to mention an idea that it would be desirable to film your peasants, dressed in the national costumes they have preserved. I dare to remind you of this, and request permission to come to your estate with the afore-mentioned aim."⁶ Tolstoy was at that time staying with his daughter, but Drankov found himself unable to undertake the filming himself, and a fortnight later, on June 28th, he informed Mme. Sukhotina that, "I shall send in my place my brother and Mr. Kozlovsky. . . . All that you show them as necessary to be filmed, they will do it." On July 1st, Mme. Sukhotina wrote to her mother:

"Staying with us are Drankov's silly and vulgar brother and his nice assistant. They don't have a drop of artistic or moral feeling. Orlov came over from his place to help them, but nothing will come of it. Today they muttered something about showing what they're filming in about two weeks, and sending for more film in the meantime, thus threatening to stay here forever."

When the crew finally broke away and returned to Moscow, Drankov thanked Tatyana Sukhotina for her "kind reception and participation in the filming by my brother and Mr. Kozlovsky." The picture, he added, "as an ethnographic glimpse of Russia, will surely offer great interest." Unfortunately, the film was neither complete nor satisfactory, and Drankov was obliged to finish the job himself, as well as to dig up an "exploitation angle" for the future release. He returned to the Sukhotin estate at Kochety on September 6th, and a diary entry from *The Final Struggle* records:

"In the evening, Drankov gave us a whole cinematograph performance. Lev Nikolayevich got up and saw it too, but was very tired. Among other things, they showed us all at Yasnaya Polyana in winter.

Drankov presented us with the film, which I am entrusting to the historical museum in Moscow for safe-keeping."

For September 8th, Sophia Andreyevna records that, "Drankov filmed us again, and afterwards filmed a village wedding that was performed expressly for this purpose." Drankov himself provided some details of this filming in an interview, published in the *Peterburgskaya Gazeta*, September 14th:

"On the initiative of Lev Nikolayevich, scenes were arranged of a Russian peasant wedding—the match-making, the contract, the marriage ceremony, the feast and dancing, etc.—to be photographed for the cinema. Lev Nikolayevich was very interested, especially in the peasants' mastering of their roles."

This makes it quite clear that Tolstoy's function during the filming was no more than as a "consultant," but surely neither as writer nor as director—as was later claimed. Sophia's businesslike notice of this event should be compared with the hectic emotional picture recorded by other members of the family:

"As soon as we returned to Kochety, [mother's] nervousness returned. . . . [Drankov] came and pressed us for a chance to photograph father. This was enough to upset mother. At any cost, she wished to be photographed with him, and she put as much emotion into the situation as if it were a question of life and death. 'They printed in some paper,' she said, 'that Tolstoy has divorced his wife! Let them all see now that it is not true!' During the photographing, she begged father several times to look at her."⁷

Nor did she approve of the idea of filming Tolstoy—alone, and without her knowledge—chopping up firewood. A. B. Goldenweiser's diary quotes Sophia Andreyevna's sarcastic comment on this wholly unplanned performance. Tolstoy, walking, met some peasants chopping firewood. One of them wished to borrow certain books that Tolstoy said were at Dr. Makovitzky's, and he said the peasant should go there to get them. When the peasant explained that he was afraid to leave his work, Tolstoy offered to take his place until he came back. As soon as the news reached Kochety that Count Tolstoy was, at that very minute, chopping firewood, Drankov raced with his camera to the spot. On that date, September 8th, Tolstoy made this entry in his last journal:

"Sophia Andreyevna becomes progressively more and more irritable. It is depressing, but I restrain myself. . . . Sophia Andreyevna insistently demanded that Drankov should film her and me together."

Not even the approaching death of Tolstoy discouraged the Tolstaya-Drankov campaign. In describing the chaos of his last days, Alexandra tells of one of Sophia Andreyevna's many attempts to break through the barriers that Tolstoy had erected against his wife: it is November 5th, 1910:

" . . . one time I nearly got into a film. Goldenweiser, who stood watch in the anteroom, called me saying that mother was on the steps and asked me to come out for a minute so that she could inquire about father's condition. I stepped out and began to answer her questions, but she asked me to let her into the anteroom, swearing that she would not enter the room. I was on the point of opening the door when I heard a buzz and, turning around, saw two photographers [Drankov and the photographer for *Russkoye Slovo*] grinding away. I waved my hands and shouted to them to stop photographing, and then turned to mother and asked her to leave at once. 'You are keeping me from

(Continued on page 52)

⁵ From V. Bulgakov's journal.

⁶ This and the following three documents quoted are cited by Vishnevsky, *Iskustvo Kino*, November, 1940.

⁷ Alexandra Tolstaya, *op. cit.*



A photograph taken on the M-G-M lot in 1930. Back row: King Vidor (wearing tennis visor), Beatrice Lillie; Standing: in the centre, Mrs. Talmadge, Greta Garbo and Nicholas Schenck, and, on the right, Norma Shearer; Seated: Hal Roach, Natalie Talmadge, Eddie Mannix, Constance Talmadge, Buster Keaton, Paul Bern, Irving Thalberg; Reclining: John Gilbert.

LION RAMPANT

The Record of M-G-M

Penelope Houston

"It seems that Loew's Inc. and M-G-M have nobody and nothing to sell that does not pertain to the box-office, the pre-occupation of the founder, his successor and the company at large"—Terry Ramsaye, in *The Motion Picture Herald*, February 13th, 1954.

"I'd rather be loved than get ten million dollars"—Louis B. Mayer, as quoted in *Picture*, by Lillian Ross.

THIS year, M-G-M is thirty years old. The company celebrated the occasion with festival programmes—held, in fact, nearly three months in advance of the legal birthday, May 17th—and brought out a booklet which proclaimed, "the unflinching boldness with which such subjects as *Ben Hur* and *Quo Vadis* are tackled"; Nicholas Schenck, president of Loew's Inc., repeated his slogan: "There is nothing wrong with this industry that good pictures cannot cure"; and Dore Schary, head of the studio, expressed, "complete confidence in our future, proud to be part of the organisation that has made so many outstanding contributions to the art of the cinema." In the public mind, meanwhile, M-G-M still stands, as it did in the 'thirties, for the judicious exploitation of stars, for big, expensive, handsome pictures in which the emphasis is on "production values": *Grand Hotel*, *The Great Ziegfeld*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Knights of the Round Table* appear more characteristic than *Fury*, *They Were Expendable*, *Intruder in the Dust* or *Teresa*. But things are not altogether as they were in the 'thirties; Hollywood, and M-G-M, have changed. And if the history of the cinema can best be summed up in the records of directors, so the

history of a film company is primarily the record of its production executives: in this case, of Louis B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg and Dore Schary.

II

When M-G-M was formed, in 1924, with the amalgamation of the Metro company, Goldwyn Pictures and Mayer Productions, Louis B. Mayer became head of the studio, with Irving Thalberg as vice-president in charge of production. (Goldwyn, incidentally, had already left the Goldwyn company, although, according to King Vidor, "he offered to enter the new combine, if they would rename it Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Goldwyn"). The short period in which the director had ruled the American film business was already coming to an end; as the big companies were formed, financial interests became increasingly powerful, studios ceased to be one-man concerns and developed into picture-making factories, and, in consequence, the executive producer acquired an importance in the industry which he still retains. The executive producer of the new company, in effect, was Irving Thalberg.

Thalberg's career, his extraordinary, unbroken record of achievement, appears almost as a paraphrase of the classic



Norma Shearer and Irving Thalberg at the Hollywood premiere of M-G-M's "Grand Hotel."

American success story. He was born in Brooklyn in 1899; he was nineteen when he joined Universal as an office boy; Carl Laemmle, president of the company, made Thalberg first his secretary, then general manager of his studio; he joined Mayer; he guided M-G-M's production policies for twelve years, and he died, aged thirty-seven, with his reputation as the greatest production genius the industry had ever known still intact. Genius is a word one encounters frequently in accounts of this phenomenal career. To get behind it, to consider the nature of the genius, would be difficult enough in itself; it is made more so by the fact that Scott Fitzgerald put so much—but how much?—of Thalberg into the character of Stahr, *The Last Tycoon*.

We have, in a sense, three views of Thalberg. There is the Hollywood legend of the small, quiet, indomitable man who, at a time when status in the industry depended largely on screen credits, would never put his own name on his films ("Credit is something that should be given to others; if you are in a position to give credit to yourself, then you do not need it".) There is Fitzgerald's definition of Stahr, not a creative personality himself, but a man supremely able to assess the creative abilities of others, to give pictures the necessary "unity"; a ruler of his world, who "... must be right always, not most of the time, but always—or the structure would melt down like gradual butter." And there is the picture of Thalberg that we can take from his films themselves, from the results of his work.

During Thalberg's twelve years at M-G-M, Stroheim, Vidor, Seastrom, La Cava, Lubitsch, Lang and others directed for the studio. Thalberg worked personally on *The Big Parade*, *The Crowd*, Stroheim's *Merry Widow* (in his time at Universal, Thalberg had removed Stroheim from the direction of *Merry-Go-Round* and, later, had been at least in part responsible for the cutting of *Greedy*),

on Lubitsch's *Merry Widow* and Seastrom's *The Scarlet Letter*. He had a considerable hand in most of M-G-M's biggest films of the period: *Broadway Melody*, *Grand Hotel*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *A Night at the Opera*, *Smilin' Through*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Romeo and Juliet*. These last three films starred Norma Shearer, Thalberg's wife, and M-G-M's leading lady.

Although Vidor was able to make *The Crowd*, La Cava to make the controversial *Gabriel over the White House*, Lang to make *Fury* (produced by the versatile Joseph L. Mankiewicz), the characteristic M-G-M films of the period were rather the big, shiny star vehicles, the films directed by Clarence Brown (*A Free Soul*, *Night Flight*, *Strange Interlude*, many of the Garbo pictures), by George Cukor (*Dinner at Eight*, *David Copperfield*, *Camille*, *Romeo and Juliet*), and by Sidney Franklin (*The Guardsman*, *Smilin' Through*, *The Good Earth*). These directors, and their colleagues such as Sam Wood and W. S. Van Dyke, were—and in some cases still are—assured, practised craftsmen, adept for the most part in the handling of actors; their films were large, lavish and profitable, and the M-G-M technicians—Cedric Gibbons, leading art director since 1924, the cameramen such as William Daniels, George Folsey and Joseph Ruttenberg—helped to make them so, and to give them that high-toned, well-bred polish which became the studio's trademark. Ultimately, perhaps, these film-makers can only be described, as Lewis Jacobs unkindly, though not unfairly, described Clarence Brown and Frank Borzage in *The Rise of the American Film*, as "big directors of little films." Although George Cukor, for instance, is still one of Hollywood's leading exponents of civilised comedy, although Clarence Brown a few years ago directed the quietly impressive *Intruder in the Dust*, the elaborate style of production in which these directors made their names has gone out of fashion; the M-G-M grand manner died with the 'thirties, and even the Garbo pictures now survive mainly through her incomparable presence.

Star-building was, of course, an M-G-M preoccupation. Mayer and Thalberg directed the careers of Garbo, Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Marie Dressler, Clark Gable and the Barrymores, and the proud slogan "More Stars than there are in Heaven" grandiosely defined a policy. In this connection, Allene Talmey wrote of Thalberg in *Doug and Mary and Others* (1927): "... although he orders scenarios from Tolstoy novels, he does it because the name of Tolstoy is good for the publicity. . . . Whether he uses Conrad or Stallings, all that Thalberg ultimately desires is a background for the beauties of Norma Shearer, Lillian Gish and Greta Garbo." But, if one begins to imagine Thalberg as a producer principally concerned to exploit his flair for diagnosing box-office winners, the record may be set straight by this perceptive passage from Gilbert Seldes' *The Great Audience*:

"One of the most consistent employers of collaborative writers was Irving Thalberg, a man sensitive to the power of the creative artist, who was compelled by the demands of his studio to hand the work of one man over to another or to add a collaborator who was virtually under obligation to alter the original work. About a year before his death, Thalberg acknowledged (in a private conversation) the faults of his system, and asked what he could do about it. . . . 'A Broadway producer,' Thalberg said, 'with an investment of five hundred dollars in a dramatic script, puts up another five hundred

and tells the author to work on his second act for another couple of months. I can't do that. *I've got a schedule to meet.* If a man brings in a script and it's got good characters and dialogue but no comedy, I get a man that can do comedy—and hope to God he won't spoil the characters. . . . I know they don't like it, and I don't like it myself. What can I do?' There was an almost morose intensity in Thalberg's approach to all the problems of making pictures; he was, perhaps, too young to conform without a struggle to all the requirements of the vast factory into which M-G-M was transforming itself. He hoped that every picture turned out under his executive care would be marked by excellence of production, that nothing would seem sloppily done; he took pride in an occasional picture to which he gave more than its share of his energies, and he seemed honestly to look toward a time when he could make a few pictures a year, with no other commitments, and with a free hand. . . ."

The time, inevitably, never came. And Thalberg was, in a sense, himself the Last Tycoon. He belonged to that extravagant, far-distant Hollywood when, as a producer said to me recently, "He could make a film, and, if he didn't like what he'd got, he could remake it." At a time when control was passing increasingly to the New York offices of the major film companies, Thalberg, according to Terry Ramsaye, "asserted vigorously the doctrine of production control of the industry, and of final authority and responsibility where the pictures are made." Whether or not Thalberg can be described—to borrow Fitzgerald's phrase for Stahr—as the producer who, "almost single-handed had moved pictures sharply forward through a decade, to a point where the content of the 'A productions' was wider and richer than that of the stage," who "had manufactured gloss and polish and control of the new Hollywood," he was beyond question the right man for the studio, at the right time. Within a few years of his death, conditions had inevitably changed.

III

Thalberg was not replaced; Louis B. Mayer, aided by a council of executives, governed the studio. The late 'thirties were the period of the Andy Hardy series, of the first M-G-M British productions (*A Yank at Oxford*, *The Citadel*), of *Gone With the Wind* and of *Boys' Town*, which won its script-writer, Dore Schary, an Oscar. It was also during these years that *Fortune*, in a survey of M-G-M published in 1939, flatly commented, "the recent Metro crop of turkeys has not been encouraging," and claimed, "it is certainly Mr. Mayer's responsibility." Mayer, an executive who entered production by the traditional way of exhibition, is a man by reputation incapable of operating on anything but the largest scale. He had built an outstandingly successful studio organisation; as chief of production, though, he appears to have trusted over-much to formulæ that were already, perhaps imperceptibly, going out of fashion. (Had he lived, one must remember, Thalberg's own conception of pictures might equally have dated). Mayer, as is well known, distrusts controversy, sophistication, and talk of art; he shares with Goldwyn an unbounded respect for the American family, and the American mother; "he likes," it has been said, "vast, glittering sets. He approves of gorgeous gowns, pretty girls, lingerie sequences and expensive assignments"; his taste ranges from the simplicity of the Andy Hardy series to the artless splendours of *Quo Vadis*.

During Mayer's regime, the studio steered clear of controversial subjects—*Fury* had been almost the only venture in that direction—while another company, Warners (now, incidentally, an ultra-conservative organisation) was earning a reputation for hard-hitting, vigorous comments on the American social scene. There was relatively little experiment in major productions, though Fred Zinnemann

Fritz Lang's "*Fury*," one of the studio's few ventures during the 1930's into the field of controversy.





and Jules Dassin were trained on "B" pictures, and Dore Schary's independent production unit was responsible for *Journey for Margaret*, *Lost Angel*, *Joe Smith, American* and *Bataan*—the last two, it now seems, forerunners of *The Next Voice You Hear* and *Battleground*. By the end of the war, both M-G-M and its veteran stars were beginning to look very slightly middle-aged, and it was only in the musical field that the company retained an unchallenged, unquestioned pre-eminence.

The record of the M-G-M musical is so remarkable as to deserve a slight digression. In the 'thirties, the characteristic production either starred Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy (*Rose Marie*, *Naughty Marietta*, *Maytime*), in which case it was frequently a costume piece, or belonged to the school of the *Broadway Melodies* and *The Great Ziegfeld*, when the emphasis was likely to be on immense staircases, lined with bizarrely costumed chorus girls, on back-stage romances and dances performed over, it sometimes seemed, several acres of glass. (Hunt Stromberg, producer both of the MacDonald-Eddy musicals and of *The Great Ziegfeld*, was a top-ranking M-G-M producer of spectacles and comedies, and was also responsible for the *Thin Man* series). But in 1939 Arthur Freed, who had been since the early 'thirties a song-writer attached to the studio, was given his first production assignment: the result was *Babes in Arms*. Four years, and half a dozen pictures, later, Freed brought Vincente Minnelli to Hollywood to direct the negro musical, *Cabin in the Sky*, and gradually a new production style was crystallised.

The new musical, simpler, lighter, gayer than its predecessors, less bound by plot contrivance than the Astaire-Rogers films of the 'thirties, increasingly adventurous in its choice of subject matter (*The Pirate* came from S. N. Behrman's *The Guardsman*, *Summer Holiday* from O'Neill's *Ah Wilderness*, and *An American in Paris* assumed, before *Moulin Rouge*, that an audience would know a Toulouse-Lautrec when it saw one), has never made the mistake of under-estimating public taste. Minnelli, Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Charles Walters, a dance director turned director, the writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green, art directors such as Jack Martin Smith, have developed one of the most consistently entertaining genres of the contemporary cinema. The producer of all the films made by Vincente Minnelli and by Gene Kelly, as well as of *Easter Parade*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Show Boat*, is Arthur Freed; ". . . talk of art grows and the audience diminishes," Freed comments in a conversation with Mayer recorded in Lillian Ross' *Picture*.

IV

"'Entertainment!' he (Louis B. Mayer) cried, transfixed by what he seemed to see on that screen. . . . 'It's good enough for you and I and the box-office,' he said, 'Not for the smart alecks. It's not good enough any more,' he went on, whining coyly, in imitation of someone saying that winning the heart of the audience was not good enough. He pounded a commanding fist on

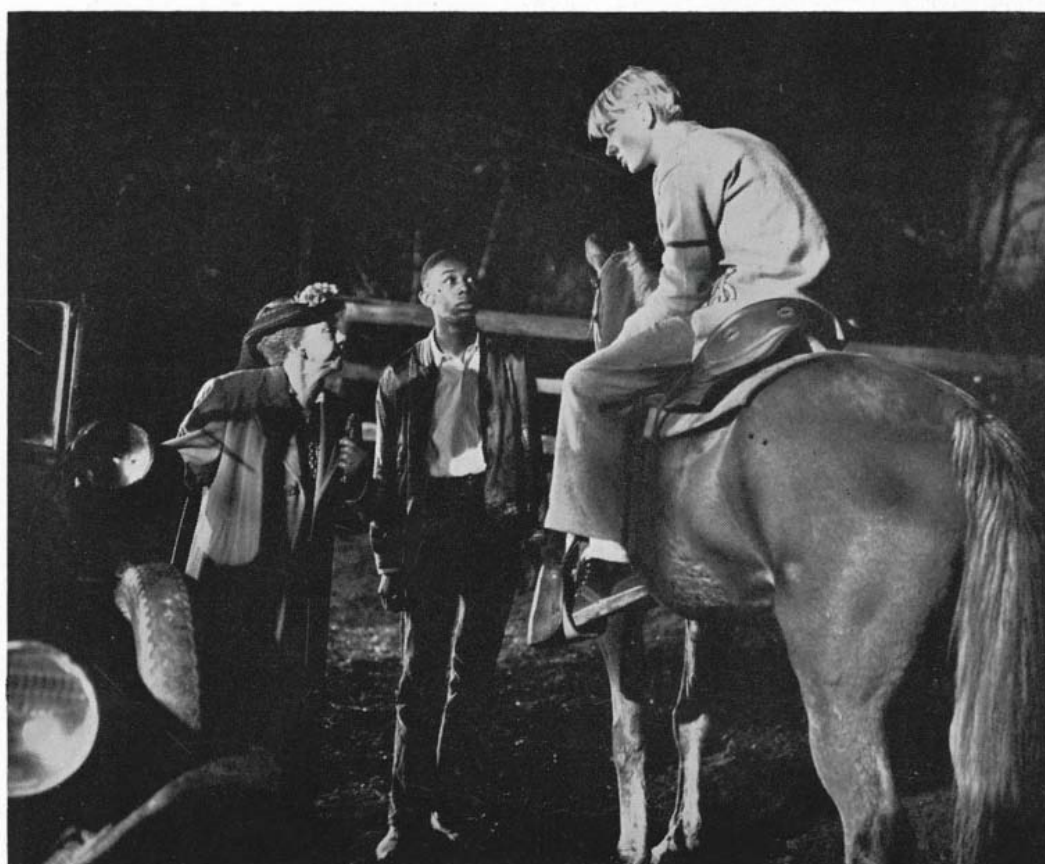
(Continued on page 29)



The record of an M-G-M star: above, Clark Gable and Norma Shearer in "A Free Soul" (1931, Clarence Brown); centre, Gable and Vivien Leigh in "Gone With the Wind" (allegedly, it was in part in return for lending their leading star to David Selznick that M-G-M acquired the rights to release this immensely profitable picture); below, Gable, as the ageing but indomitable white hunter of "Mogambo," with Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly.



Two important and exceptional pictures: King Vidor's "Hallelujah" (above) was one of the first films to present negro characters seriously and sympathetically on the screen. In 1949 Clarence Brown's version of William Faulkner's novel "Intruder in the Dust" (right) was the strongest, and most penetrating, of the series of films concerned with the colour question.





In the early 'thirties, the emphasis on stars was at its height, and the all-star picture came into fashion. One of the first was "Grand Hotel"; Garbo and John Barrymore (above) appeared with Joan Crawford, Wallace Beery, Lionel Barrymore and Lewis Stone.



Wallace Beery and Jean Harlow in "Dinner at Eight"; the two Barrymores were again in the cast, which also included Marie Dressler, Edmund Lowe and Billy Burke.



The musical in the 'thirties: "The Great Ziegfeld" (1936) may have borrowed from Ziegfeld the particular opulence of its staging; such ornate production numbers, though, were also characteristic of Hollywood, and of M-G-M.



The musical in the 'fifties: Gene Kelly and Oscar Levant in a scene from Vincente Minnelli's gay and stylish "An American in Paris".



Left, James Murray and Eleanor Boardman in "The Crowd," in which King Vidor took as his hero, "the average fellow, who walks through life and sees quite a lot of drama taking place around him."

M-G-M's pictures are, by reputation, large and lavish. The three films illustrated here—King Vidor's "The Crowd," Vincente Minnelli's "Under the Clock" and Fred Zinnemann's "Teresa"—belong to another tradition; they are all studies of everyday life, all made with affection and human sympathy.



Above, Robert Walker and Judy Garland in "Under the Clock," Minnelli's story of a wartime romance.



Left, Pier Angeli and John Ericson in "Teresa," Zinnemann's more serious consideration of the same subject.

his desk and looked at me. 'Let me tell you something!' he said. 'Prizes! Awards! Ribbons! We had two pictures here. An Andy Hardy picture, with little Mickey Rooney, and *Ninotchka*, with Greta Garbo. *Ninotchka* got the prizes. Blue ribbons! Purple ribbons! Nine bells and seven stars! Which picture made the money? *Andy Hardy* made the money. Why? Because it won praise from the heart. No ribbons!'

By 1950, when Lillian Ross arrived from New York to follow the progress of *The Red Badge of Courage* and to gather material for *Picture*, her biting investigation of Hollywood mores, the situation at M-G-M had changed. Louis B. Mayer was still enthroned at his desk, "covered with four cream-coloured telephones, a prayer book, several photographs of lions, a tintype of Mayer's mother and a statuette of the Republican Party's elephant." In charge of production, however, was Dore Schary, who had returned to M-G-M after a successful career at R.K.O. The appointment of Schary in 1948—on Mayer's invitation—was in itself a sign of the changing times. The boom of the immediate post-war years was over; competition from television could no longer be disregarded; the new-style production executive was the man who could make pictures more quickly, more cheaply, without any significant sacrifice of quality. The new policy, discussed by Dore Schary in his *The Case History of a Movie*, was to cut down on overheads, to keep fewer people under contract, to buy only those stories that the studio felt reasonably confident of making; even at the biggest Hollywood studio, the old, extravagant days were decidedly over.

Schary, however, introduced further changes into M-G-M's production policy. He instituted a series of high-grade, low budget pictures (about which Gavin Lambert wrote in the March, 1950, *SIGHT AND SOUND*), on which young directors such as John Sturges, Anthony Mann and Gerald Mayer were profitably trained. A number of films—*Intruder in the Dust*, from William Faulkner's novel, Fred Zinnemann's *Teresa*, John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle*, Richard Brooks' *Crisis*, Dore Schary's own productions, *Go For Broke!* and *The Next Voice You Hear*—enterprisingly indicated a rather more serious concern than previously with the facts of contemporary life. Mayer, the old showman, had, if we are to believe *Picture* and other sources, little affection for this type of film. When he finally left the studio, in 1951, he was quoted as saying, not without bitterness, "I am going to be more active in picture-making than I have been at any time in the past fifteen years—but it will be at a studio and under conditions where I shall have the right to make the right kind of picture—decent, wholesome pictures for Americans."

This would also appear to be the aim of Dore Schary, appointed head of the studio after Mayer's departure. Schary has been described—again by the invaluable Miss Ross—as having in his manner "a definite hint of a firm-minded and paternalistic Sunday school teacher." Something of this quality comes through in his personal productions for M-G-M; *The Next Voice You Hear*, about the effect on a middle-class American family of a Divine visitation; *Go For Broke!* a tribute to the war service of



Variations on the domestic scene: above, Mickey Rooney and Lewis Stone in "Love Laughs at Andy Hardy"; centre, the Miniverts (Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon) prepare for war; below, James Whitmore, Nancy Davis and Gary Gray as the representative American family of "The Next Voice You Hear."

the Nisei troops; *It's a Big Country*, an unrestrained piece of drum-beating for the American way of life. Serious, tolerant, possibly a little naive, and, one feels, exceptionally honest in his intentions, Scharly is a high-ranking executive of a far from conventional type. His personal productions, though, the expression of his belief that, "decent people doing good things can be made dramatically interesting and exciting," have not altogether come up to expectations. In a Scharly production, the message is likely to assume a shade more importance than the picture, while the conscientious expressions of sympathy for racial minorities can, perversely, come perilously close to patronage in the eyes of a non-American audience. His pictures warily tread the narrow boundary line between sober idealism and sentimentality.

Scharly's record suggests that he may be more interested in the relatively small-scale study of human relationships than in the elaborate spectacles which the war with television, and CinemaScope, have made fashionable. But, with all studios concentrating their activities on fewer, and bigger, films, the last few years have been a poor time for experiment; M-G-M's "quality" low-budget pictures—the neat little thrillers, the occasional problem picture, such as the humane, likeable *Shadow in the Sky*—seem, with rare exceptions, to have been quietly dropped. To set against *Quo Vadis*, the third, and least, *Merry Widow*, and the British-made historical jamborees, *Ivanhoe* and *The Knights of the Round Table*, we have however, *Pat and Mike*, *Lili*, *The Band Wagon* and the majestic *Julius Caesar*. And in acquiring the services of John Houseman, producer of *Caesar*, *The Bad and the Beautiful* and *Executive Suite*, and previously of *They Live By Night* and *Letter From an Unknown Woman*, M-G-M has notably strengthened its production team.

Executive Suite is the all-star picture, 1954 model, with a social conscience; a few months ago, Joan Crawford,

one of the studio's first stars, made a dashing return in *Torch Song*, and John Ford refurbished *Red Dust* to provide a lesson in popular entertainment as *Mogambo*; more recently, another *Rose Marie* has been tuned up, another *Ben Hur* launched. The changes are, perhaps, less than they seem; and in the "fiercely competitive jungle" of Hollywood the thirty-year-old lion is still, unmistakably, roaring.

The Metro Picture Corporation was formed in 1915 by a group of independent film "exchanges" (distributors) which, having suffered under the distribution and production monopoly of the Motion Picture Patents Company, determined to protect itself by entering the production field. In doing so, the group followed the example of William Fox, who had started a new trend in integration by being the first distributor to open his own studio.

Loew's Inc., the parent company of M-G-M, was an important cinema-owning concern, built up by Marcus Loew from his "nickelodeons" at the turn of the century. By the time Loew acquired the Metro company, he had a \$25 million cinema "empire." The Loew-M-G-M combine was not the first example of complete vertical integration in the American industry. That had taken place in 1919 as a result of the rivalry between Adolph Zukor's Paramount and First National. The latter, a distributor-exhibitor combine, went into production; Paramount retaliated by forming a cinema network.

In common with the other companies of the "Big Five" (Warners, Paramount, 20th Century-Fox and R.K.O.), M-G-M has been subject to the complicated "trust-busting" actions of the U.S. Government in recent years, aimed at divorcing cinema-ownership from production and distribution interests.

Notwithstanding divorcement problems, M-G-M continues on its outstandingly profitable path. "Ars Gratia Artis" is its motto: the financial results would suggest that such a policy can sometimes prove very rewarding. Over the past ten years, Loew's Inc. has made a total profit (before taxation) of \$167 million; after taxation, there was \$94.8 million left for the shareholders.

A studio gathering in 1943: Louis B. Mayer surrounded by the stars of M-G-M.





"Knave of Hearts": Monsieur Ripois (Gérard Philipe) with three victims—Margaret Johnston, Joan Greenwood and Valerie Hobson.

Film Reviews

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

The dry, sardonic comedy of morals, dormant in the cinema since the retirement of Preston Sturges, has found an unexpected new exponent in René Clément: in ruthlessness and wit, *Knave of Hearts* has nothing to fear from *The Lady Eve*. This alone is a great deal to be grateful for, but Clément has attempted something else besides. Unlike a Sturges film, *Knave of Hearts* is essentially serious: for all its flippancy and emotional knockabout, it is more than an artificial comedy. M. Ripois, the inveterate Don Juan hero, going cynically from seduction to seduction, collecting mistresses like trophies, is for the most part watched with an indulgent eye: no judgment is passed from without—it is this that seems to have annoyed critics in this country so much—until the logic of the comedy situation makes him meet the nemesis of his own shallowness. If one can ignore the last few minutes of the film—which look like a rather clumsy concession to the box-office and negate all that it has said till then—*Knave of Hearts* emerges as an unexceptionably moral film.

Up to these last few minutes, Clément's invention and effortless command of all the camera's tricks keep the story full of surprises and galloping at an exhilarating pace: it is a pleasure to see so wittily controlled a piece of craftsmanship. Ripois' affairs are quickly and boldly sketched in, with sure characterisation and an awareness of English social life that is astonishing in a French director. The professional seducer instinctively identifies and then systematically works on each of his victims' weaknesses: he wins the bossy career woman (Margaret Johnston) by gallantry; the sweet Kensington Miss (Joan Greenwood) by persistence and promises of marriage; the prostitute (Germaine Montero) by an appeal for sympathy; and the haughty society girl (Valerie Hobson) by switching on the charm. All this is brilliantly done, each episode a satisfying and self-contained whole. But the final irony—that Ripois, wooing with his own personality for the first time, should be rejected—never quite emerges because the whole episode with Patricia (Natasha Parry) is the least successful and is hopelessly compromised by the ending. Ripois, having lost the only girl he cares for—just how deeply the film never quite makes clear—surveys himself briefly in a mirror, sheds a solitary tear and then goes to the window to feign suicide before Patricia's eyes; an accident turns sham into reality, and Ripois survives his first serious

affair as a cripple. This, really, is the climax of the film, but the makers—one can hardly believe that the director wanted it—have added a feeble little joke ending showing the crippled Don Juan being wheeled about in an invalid's chair and winking at pretty passers-by. The moment of tragic irony is wasted in favour of an irrelevant bit of Gallic charm. (Showing the romantic side of a Don Juan in the popular cinema is one thing, being honest about him quite another: two other films of recent years stumbled over this same obstacle. Jacques Becker's *Falbalas* makes the lover commit suicide after being rejected in his first genuine affair—a dramatically excellent idea which was spoiled by cheap melodramatic handling. And *The Rake's Progress* let Rex Harrison die in battle, a neat conclusion but hardly the vindication of its hero that the film implied.)

That *Knave of Hearts* fails finally to come to grips with its central character is at once the result and the cause of Gérard Philipe's brilliant but somehow off-key performance. He has been directed for a muted kind of slapstick, and this, revealing though it often is, is finally not revealing enough. The little hops and skips of the performance strive slightly too hard for charm; they might have been acceptable if they did not also extend over the rare moments when Ripois is on 'screen alone—as he leaves the prostitute after stealing her money, after Patricia has left him—and when we want to see him full face. It is as if the director lacked the courage of his own ruthlessness.

Knave of Hearts is realised with a technical bravura that makes it continually fascinating and alive. The script, by Raymond Queneau, Hugh Mills and Clément, is economical, sharp and dexterous with casual dialogue; the musical score by Roman Vlad, giving each mistress an ironical theme tune of her own, is ingeniously witty; and Clément's picture of London is extraordinarily vivid and real. His much-publicised concealed camera technique occasionally leaves casual bystanders gaping at the audience, but this is a price one is very willing to pay for having real people on the screen. The scenes in the pub and on a bus, in a restaurant and during rush-hour traffic, have direct and unmistakable authenticity. No British feature director has used London so well. The team of British actresses is brilliantly used, Valerie Hobson, Margaret Johnston and Diana Decker each contributing an excellent character sketch. Yet only in Joan Greenwood's performance does one feel that an actress is doing more than being cleverly used. Her beautifully observed middle-class girl has a pathos which is somehow too direct and affecting for the film, and temporarily lifts it above its level of cold virtuosity.



Kazuo Hasegawa, Machiko Kyo and Koreya Senda in a scene from "Gate of Hell."

JIGOKUMON (Gate of Hell)

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

One begins to suspect that more good films are being made at the moment in Japan than in any other country; but, short of going to Tokyo, it is impossible to see more than a handful of them. *Rashomon* was the revelation of the 1950 Venice festival, and four years later the veil of ignorance is far from being lifted. Intervening festivals have provided a few more glimpses, mainly of some beautiful historical and legendary dramas (*The Tale of Genji*, *Ugetsu Monegatari*); and *Jigokumon* (*Gate of Hell*, London Films), which won the Grand Prix at Cannes this year, is of their company.

If the idiom seems strange or difficult, that is not wholly surprising. For these films come from a country which, less than a hundred years ago, was still almost as isolated from contact with western culture as Tibet, and they are rooted in an ancient artistic tradition. Only *Rashomon*, of the costume films we have seen, is not wholly of this tradition; acting style and dramatic tempo are closer to western idioms, and give one a hint of the "modern" realistic methods that other Japanese directors have been evolving, and that so impressed the fortunate ones who have seen *Four Chimneys*, *The Children of Hiroshima*, and Kurosawa's films with a contemporary setting.

Teinosuke Kinugasa, who made *Jigokumon*, has always specialised in historical films acted in the Kabuki style. He has been working in the cinema since about 1927; his *Crossways* (1929) was shown in France and, during the 30's, by the Film Society in London. With his contemporary, Kenji Mizoguchi (who made the superb *Ugetsu Monegatari*, shown at Venice last year), he seems to be the leading exponent of this genre. As in Mizoguchi's film, and Kurosawa's *Tora-No-O*, the story is taken from classic literature and is set in a remote period of the past during one of the civil wars which make up so great a part of Japanese history. It is 1160, and two rival families are struggling for power; a revolt against the Emperor Goshirakawa has just been suppressed by his regent Kiyomori. This, however, is only the background. An episode in the revolt contrives the meeting of the film's two leading characters, Kesa, wife of a warrior in the service of the Imperial Palace, and Moritoh, one of Kiyomori's soldiers, who falls violently in love with her. Discovery that she is married only heightens his passion, makes it obsessive; he tries, unsuccessfully, various ways of making himself attractive to the chaste, subservient wife, and finally tricks her into meeting him at night, and threatens

to kill both her and Wataru unless she yields to him. The terrified Kesa decides to die to save her husband. She pretends to help Moritoh to assassinate him at night, but takes his place, and is stabbed by her would-be lover. Appalled and remorseful, Moritoh begs the husband's forgiveness, ritually crops his hair, and departs for a monastery. A last shot shows the distant figure of a monk entering the portals of *Jigokumon* in the early morning mist. . . . (Moritoh, in fact, lived to the age of 79, and achieved fame as an influential religious figure, "the venerable Mongaku.")

The slow, calm, exquisitely decorated narrative, the formal Kabuki style of playing, the magical colour, all combine to take one into a world of legend, ritual, symbol. The opening battle scene, shot through veils of waving flags and banners, the rich costumes and jewels, the huge temple with its red "gate of hell," the ordeal of an audience with the proud regent and rigid conventions of court life—pageantry, landscape and mode of living seem to come from the regions of fairy tale, cruel, delicate and feudal. The patient nobility of Kesa herself, all beauty, long-suffering devotion and sacrifice, and a symbol of traditional Japanese womanhood, the wise but remote husband, the fierce rapacious lover, the unexpectedness of the renunciatory ending are, in the pure sense, "story-book."

And then there is the playing. The Kabuki style was surely born of the Japanese mask. Since national custom demands that the face conceal emotion, the Japanese may meet the most terrible of situations with impassivity, or at most a misleadingly polite smile. Thus the acting evolved by the traditional Japanese theatre formalises and abstracts expression of emotion; it is either distilled to an almost invisible essence or, suddenly, released in violent, symbolic outbursts. Here it is in the lust and desire of Moritoh (Kazuo Hasegawa) that violence is unleashed, at moments when his whole body seems to vibrate and spring with passion. The characterisation of Kesa and her husband (Machiko Kyo—whose formal style is interesting to compare with her performance in *Rashomon*—and Isao Yamagata) is sustained on a note of interior stillness; in the wonderful last scene, the confrontation of husband and murderer, the subtlety and sculptured power of Kabuki playing is seen at its most tellingly impressive.

Jigokumon is photographed in Eastman Color by Kohei Sugiyama (cameraman of *Ugetsu Monegatari*), and visually it must be one of the most enthralling films ever made. The system has a greater range than Technicolor, is less pastel than Agfacolor, and its most delicate effects—a blue morning mist, a solitary red temple in a wintry grey landscape, a

stretch of seashore under a pallid, cloudy sky—are perhaps the most extraordinary. To a westerner, the dramatic progression is less satisfyingly concentrated than in some of the other recent Japanese films, but it is none the less a rare, exotic work of art.

EXECUTIVE SUITE

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

The American business man has perhaps scarcely yet recovered from the blows dealt him by Sinclair Lewis. As a hero, he went out of fashion, and one has become so accustomed to the literary and screen stereotypes—the noisy, aggressive tycoon, the Capra-style millionaire who would rather give money away than make it, the tired, suburban hero of a J. P. Marquand novel—that a film given up to the proposition that big business is an activity interesting in itself has the undoubted advantage of novelty. *Executive Suite* (M-G-M) concerns the manoeuvres and intrigues which follow the sudden death of the all-powerful president of a large furniture manufacturing company. Although any one of the five vice-presidents might succeed him, the issue early resolves itself into a duel between the coldly assured, opportunist financial expert (Fredric March) and the idealistic young designer (William Holden), who puts the quality of the product above dividends. On the side-lines are Paul Douglas, Walter Pidgeon and Dean Jagger, as company executives, Louis Calhern, as a Wall Street operator, Barbara Stanwyck, as an unhappy heiress who resented the dead tycoon's absorption in furniture, and assorted wives and secretaries, played by June Allyson, Shelley Winters and Nina Foch. As is usual in an all-star picture, the players are put through their familiar paces; Shelley Winters despondently mopes; Barbara Stanwyck contemplates suicide from a high window; Paul Douglas is a genial blusterer and Louis Calhern a sharply malicious intriguer. Reliable performances come from William Holden and Nina Foch, and an exceptionally competent one from Fredric March, who plays the financier with a shrewdly calculated blend of suavity and self-made toughness.

The cast performs, on the whole, well, the numerous small incidents which make up the film are neatly interlocked, natural sound (there is no background music) is effectively handled, and the whole production has an expensive, smooth veneer. Yet the picture remains unexpectedly flat and remote; the script (by Ernest Lehman, from a novel by Cameron Hawley) is a little too slick—there is more film convention

than real life in the over-stressed incidents involving Barbara Stanwyck, or in the scenes with June Allyson which establish the designer's cosy domestic background—and Robert Wise's direction appears mechanically adroit rather than authentically imaginative or perceptive. It is not often that a film made with such machine-tooled precision can be called dull to watch, but passages in *Executive Suite* seem so, principally because the script lacks driving force, and the conception remains an exterior one. The character of the financial expert is, ultimately, only a variation on the familiar figure of the corrupt politician or the corrupt newspaper editor; the harangue on business morality which wins the day for Holden appears only a degree less naïve than most similar Hollywood exhortations. The framework, as often happens, has been constructed with a firmness and validity lacking in the central human situation.

The film's clockwork smoothness and immaculate finish can presumably be credited principally to its producer, John Houseman, who brought the same qualities to *The Bad and the Beautiful* and, on a very different level, to *Julius Caesar*. Houseman is rapidly becoming one of the relatively few producers whose name means as much on the credits of a picture as that of the director; *Executive Suite*, flawed though it may be, reinforces an impression that he is also one of the most expert picture-makers in present day Hollywood.

FATHER BROWN

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown* does not, on the surface, seem to hold much promise for the film-maker. The stories are rather improbably contrived and inconsistently plotted; their combination of quaintness and heartiness dates them (how different, incidentally, the cheerful Roman Catholicism of Chesterton, Belloc and others, with its fondness for beer and Beachy Head, from today's sombre and guilty Greene, Mauriac and company); and, apart from the rotund little detective priest, bent on tracking down criminals to liberate their souls, they are deficient in solid characterisation—especially if one compares them with *Sherlock Holmes*. Written over a period of years (the first appeared in 1911, the last in 1935), the stories are complacently indifferent to social change and retain their pre-World War I atmosphere, most of all, perhaps, in their firm division of criminals into elegant, aristocratic master-crooks and comic pseudo-Dickensian burglars from the lower orders.

Not the least surprise of Robert Hamer's very engaging new



Board meeting: Fredric March, Barbara Stanwyck, Walter Pidgeon and William Holden in "Executive Suite."



"Father Brown": Alec Guinness and Joan Greenwood.

film (Columbia) is its successful transposition of elements from two of these stories to the present day. We are apparently in 1954, yet people hardly ever use the telephone; the power of the Press appears pleasantly negligible; there is no trace of psycho-analysis; absolutely no sex at all; violence, when it rarely occurs, is polite and reluctant (no firearms), and got over with as quickly and painlessly as possible. How strange the little priest seems, as hero of a detective episode, when we compare him with, say, Marlowe, sour, cynical, wryly lecherous, literally and metaphorically prowling the slums. Of course, the world of *Father Brown* doesn't really exist—even Agatha Christie, in some ways equally leisurely and fastidious, admits murder and, vaguely, eroticism, which never intrude here—but Hamer's film makes us wish that it did. His talent is the most civilised one in British films, and this is the first time since *Kind Hearts and Coronets* that he has been given an opportunity to display its truest qualities.

The story concerns Father Brown's duel with a master criminal, Flambeau, adept at disguising himself, who owns a chateau in the Macon country and steals works of art—his taste is impeccable—to build up his private collection. Father Brown wants not only to retrieve the antique cross that Flambeau has stolen from his church (the ecclesiastical authorities will, indeed, be extremely displeased if he doesn't) but, in effect, to "convert" his adversary. For every criminal, he believes, is a poor lamb strayed from the flock, and must be brought back to enduring pasture. In the end, he succeeds doubly; the Flambeau collection is retrieved and most successfully exhibited at the Louvre, and Flambeau himself returns, like the prodigal son, to his Father's bosom.

Because of its antecedence, the film remains something of a freak. One can't feel that Hamer (and his collaborator on the script, Thelma Schnee) believe in their hero's "mission"—Flambeau's repentance is most discreetly, nicely and improbably smoothed over—and a benevolent agnostic wit, much closer to Firbank, creeps in from time to time: the bevy of priests setting off like excited schoolchildren from a London terminal for their conference in Rome, being hustled into carriages by impatient porters, and, later, leaning over the rails of the Channel packet, woefully seasick; or the extraordinary scene, which has almost the wicked absurdity of Bunuel, of Father Brown, blind as a bat without the spectacles he has accidentally broken, staggering helplessly through the courtyard of a French public building. Sometimes, too, the plotting is as unsatisfactory as Chesterton's—the way Father Brown misleads and escapes from the police in Paris, for instance, which is made altogether too easy. But it is the spirit, finally, that counts; this particular contrivance leads to a most agreeable misunderstanding—the arrest of a bearded,

expatriate American Left Bank painter, mistaken by the police for Flambeau.

In the same way, Alec Guinness's performance reflects the sophistication of the original material. It is clever, inventive, winsome, and very conscious of all this; occasionally he confuses comic characterisation with making funny faces and over-calculates his effects; but he has many endearing moments, notably the charming soliloquy on the banks of the Thames, surrounded by swans, the first meeting in the train with Flambeau (who is disguised as a priest) and their contest of biblical quotations, and the superb encounter with the aged Vicomte de Verdigris (one of Ernest Thesiger's incomparable grotesques), in which the two men continue inadvertently to drop their spectacles and both pairs are finally destroyed. Peter Finch's Flambeau, sardonic and with a dry kind of melancholy, is a successful creation, and Joan Greenwood, on the fringe of the story as Lady Warren, a wealthy young widow who likes solitude and the paintings of Boudin, makes some delicious, exquisitely mannered appearances. She incidentally provides the motive for one of the best scenes: a fashionable London auction, at which her unique chess set (solid silver, designed by Cellini) is to be offered as bait for Flambeau, who, impenetrably disguised as ever, might be any member of the picturesque, flamboyant company. In its ironic tension, the sequence reminds one of a pre-war Hitchcock film; the various bidders—a hearty Texan thrilled to meet an English titled lady, an insinuating Italian aristocrat, a splendid maharajah, and a phalanx of rapacious old ladies—are beautifully characterised; and John Hawkesworth's art direction, apt and stylish throughout, seizes the opportunity for some legitimate cadenzas. It is, in fact, a little classic of its kind.

THE SAGA OF ANATAHAN

Reviewed by Tony Richardson

The Saga of Anatahan starts with a promising subject, an actual incident of the last war. A group of about a dozen Japanese sailors are shipwrecked and marooned on the atoll of Anatahan in the Pacific Ocean. In possession they find one man—and a woman—who have stayed behind when the island was evacuated. Isolated from any contact with the world outside, they do not know when the war is over; they guard their lonely island and quarrel and murder for the girl amongst them. This incident Josef von Sternberg has treated fictionally for his film. He has directed and photographed it, and re-created the setting himself. It is virtually his first feature film since *Shanghai Gesture* (1942); *Macao* (1951) was largely re-shot, and *Jet Pilot* (1952) has not yet been shown.

Inevitably, one approached a work so obviously personal with certain associations and expectations. The subject itself seemed to give ideal scope for certain aspects of von Sternberg's past work: his eroticism, his sensationalism, his decorative flair. Part of the fascination of the film is that it satisfies none of these expectations—so much so, in fact, that it has an almost unconscious "alienation" effect, like Cocteau's setting of a ballet rehearsed to jazz rhythms to the Bach Passacaglia. Von Sternberg deliberately eschews violence, and most of the murders take place off screen; only in one set—a charming hut entirely hung with variously shaped shells—is there evidence of his mannered, personal use of décor. Instead, von Sternberg has attempted to treat the story of Anatahan as an epic of heroism and endurance. He has succeeded only in presenting a lame, shambling chronicle. Titles indicate the years passing, the seas still surge against the shores of the island, but the shots are mere tokens, without the charge of poetry. The men rebel against their leader, a bullying fanatic, and then, later, reinstate him; jealousies are aroused; reigning lovers are killed. But all these events seem arbitrary and meaningless. There is no sense that time and isolation develop the characters in any way, enlarge or narrow their visions. In the same way, von Sternberg has failed convincingly to create the locale itself: the island remains a series of unrelated sets. It forms a sharp contrast to Bunuel's handling of similar spatial and temporal problems in *Robinson Crusoe*.

The failure, though, lies deeper. Von Sternberg has taken no consistent attitude to his material. At times, the film seems to be presenting a heroic picture of resistance and

loyalty in the teeth of isolation; at others, merely a piece of detached observation on the effect of isolation on the sexual habits of those concerned—so detached that it might be dealing with some species of curious insects. This impression is heightened by the weirdly gnomish dispassion of the observations and the metaphors in the commentary. (The film is played in Japanese, without sub-titles, and the English commentary is spoken by von Sternberg himself.) As yet another murder is committed for the girl's sake, "the Queen Bee takes herself a new drone. . . ." Strangely, this is further emphasised, too, by the actors themselves. To judge performances from a race and culture so remote from one's own is always dangerous, but one suspects that much of the playing here is no more than commonplace. Nevertheless, the Japanese are extraordinarily potent, physically and emotionally, and their impact is considerable enough to keep one's attention over stretches of the film. The very sketchiness of the characterisation capitalises on their raw, alien energy, so that they appear not so much the recognisable human beings of *Rashomon*, but vivid *ubermarionettes* projected from the mind of the garrulous old *régis seur*, giving force and life to his shallow conceptions.

It is difficult to find much else to praise in the film, with its slow, wandering rhythm, its haphazard construction. Perhaps the kindest thing that can be said about this "tribute to the Japanese people and their art" is that it is, as they say, a collector's piece.

THE LIVING DESERT

Reviewed by Basil Wright

The skill and ingenuity here displayed certainly surpass Disney's earlier efforts in this series. One after the other, exact in colour, pin-sharp in close-up, they are paraded for us—

"Complicated monsters, head and tail,
Scorpion and asp, and *Amphisbæna dire*,
Cerastes horned, Hydrus, and *Ellops drear*"

—nearly all of them locked in combat, fighting (for survival) to the death.

It would be difficult to overpraise the intrinsic content and the pictorial quality of the scenes obtained by Disney's patient photographers; but as to the method by which they are presented in a complete film, I have certain reservations.

In *The Living Desert* Disney continues to indulge in what might be called the Bathetic Fallacy—the attachment of irrelevant human comment, often in terms of music, to the depiction of animal activities. Thus the love-making of scorpions is accompanied by the drill of a square dance. Now my personal experience of scorpions is not such as to encourage any idea of their breeding; and if they are to be shown doing so, I am not impressed by any attempts, however brilliant, to make their activities comic. It seems to me that this technique is a reversal of the cartoon approach in which the equation of Mickey or Donald with human beings is justified by the fact that nothing is real. The reverse is sour, because the animals and birds and insects *are* real, and are not fair game for wisecracks of which they could never in nature be conscious. The result is that we, not they, are being made fools of.

Furthermore, Disney seems to me to be in danger of trying to give us too much of a good thing. *Nature's Half Acre*, for instance, would have been a better and far more convincing film had it confined itself to one specific half-acre of land, instead of becoming a compendium of diverse episodes, many of them apparently chosen (from wide geographic areas) for their sensational qualities. In *The Living Desert* we are treated, sometimes literally *ad nauseam*, to battles between tarantula and wasp, snake and rat, hawk and rattlesnake, tortoise and tortoise, until we begin to think more in terms of the sand-table than of the vast and burning spaces of the desert. For me the best sequences—and they are few and far between—are those with a sense of space and distance, as for instance the dramatic rise and surge of flood-water which rages across the wilderness, only to be absorbed, sucked down by the insatiable sand.

But in general the Disney technique tends to bring the

"*The Living Desert*": encounter between a rattlesnake and a Kangaroo rat.

desert to the audience instead of (as happens in films like the Soviet *Life in the Arctic*) bringing the audience to the desert. The difference is enormous, and should be noted.

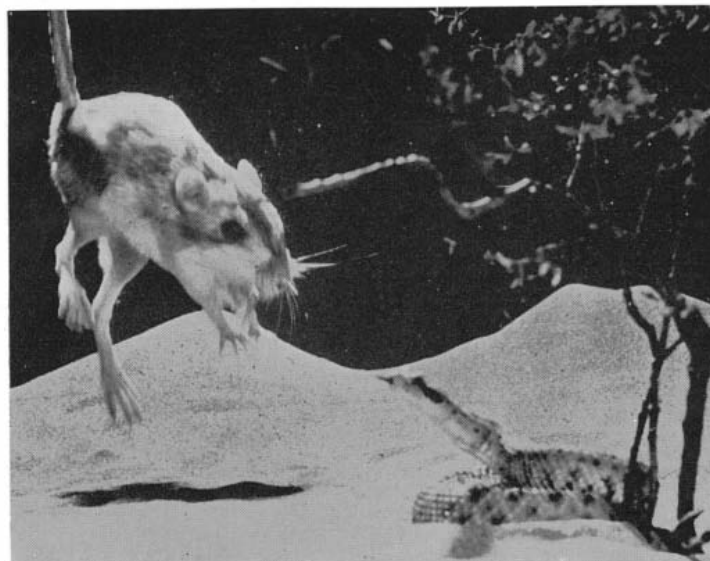
I am aware that I am in a minority when I make these strictures; and I repeat that the material of which the film is made is quite wonderful. It includes, incidentally, a remarkable and surely unique study of the brief, beautiful life of the night-flowering *Cereus*.

LES ORGUEILLEUX

Reviewed by Tony Richardson

Mexico is like a myth; you can discover anything you want in it. Yves Allegret, in his film *Les Orgueilleux*, has gone to find the smartest of settings, heat, squalor, poverty, elaborate churches, spotted fever—and hypodermic needles plunged into Michèle Morgan's backside. Surprisingly, even on a sensational level, he makes very little of them; sequences of injections and of the sick man vomiting, which in cleverer hands—a Clouzot's or a Clément's—might have seemed nauseating, appear here as pointless and as muffled in their effect as the bursting firecrackers and exploding Judas figures with which Allegret litters the picture.

The film is based on a story by Sartre, *L'Amour Redempteur*, but it is difficult to see from the meandering confusion what exactly was his original idea. There are occasionally hints that the script once had something of a racial theme, but these are not developed; nor, in this setting, could they be. A wealthy French couple touring in Mexico are stranded in an out of the way village when the husband develops spotted fever. He dies: and his wife (Michèle Morgan) falls in love with a French doctor, who has lived in the village several years, completely gone to seed after having accidentally caused the death of his own wife in childbirth. Her affection finally penetrates the doctor (Gérard Philipe) and together they stay in the village to fight the epidemic. That any plot emerges at all is somewhat surprising. Allegret obviously sees himself *sub specie* Dostoevski, and so, wearily, we are dragged from degradation to degradation, from inconsistency to inconsistency. Allegret apparently cannot resist anything, a touch of local colour on the streets, a commonplace irony, the sick lying among tortured crucifixes in the sacristy, or an incidental reaction amongst the main characters, and, consequently, he is unable to exploit anything successfully. And behind it all is the naively pretentious attitude of the currently fashionable "toughie" French cinema, that the more dirt and suffering and strain that can be got on to the screen, the more we are getting Life, Reality. Brutal that eye may be, but frank. Gérard Philipe succeeds as usual in giving an able and intelligent performance; and in a sequence where he desperately dances and clowns for a glass of tequila, he has a touch of true Dostoevski frenzy, despite the theatrical conception of the scene. The heat, however, proves a little too much for Michèle Morgan.



THE BIG HEAT (Columbia). It seems a long time since Fritz Lang gave us a good film: in fact, the sense of strain and stylistic pretentiousness in his recent work—when it has not been mere commercial hokum—had almost made one abandon hope. This makes it the more unfortunate that his latest film should have passed almost unnoticed. For it is an extremely good thriller, distinguished by precisely those virtues which Lang's pictures have in the past few years so painfully lacked: tautness and speed; modesty of intention; intelligent, craftsman-like writing. Above all, it is directed with a dramatic incisiveness, a sharp-edged observation that keeps the pitch of interest and excitement continuously high.

Adapted from a novel by William McGivern, *The Big Heat* is scripted by Sidney Boehm. He has not done so well since *Union Station*—a film which this rather recalls in its ingenious construction and clever, likely motivation. The handling here, however, is more frankly melodramatic, and the world evoked nearer to that of Raymond Chandler. The situation is classic: the unassuming crusader versus the high-class racketeer; the crusader operating alone; the racketeer manœuvring his thugs (inside and outside the city police) from his guarded mansion in the snob section of town. Unlike Marlowe, Dave Bannon is a professional cop; but his disrespect of persons soon gets him suspended, and his conduct shows the same doggedness, the same human fallibility, the same hunger after righteousness as the Chandler hero's. He challenges the racketeer, and pays for it: his wife is murdered; bitterly he dedicates himself to vengeance. Glenn Ford plays this part with a deceptively casual charm that covers without concealing a real inward intensity. (This admirable actor is one of the few surviving in Hollywood who are able convincingly to convey any moral awareness or conflict.) As the gay, incautious girl friend of a vicious hoodlum, Gloria Grahame acts with brilliant wit and considerable subtlety; and all the way down the cast—of generally unfamiliar faces—the characterisations have a welcome individuality of line.

The Big Heat is one of those enjoyable films which make no great claims for themselves, yet which so balance style and intention (like the early Hitchcock's, for instance) that they are finally more satisfying than many more ambitious works. The film lacks the density of a *Maltese Falcon*; one or two of its elements are over-conventional; Lang's viewpoint remains exterior. All the same, it creates its world, and proves that, when his interest is engaged, this director still has at his control the technique of a master. Contributory skills that also deserve praise are Charles Lang's, whose lighting powerfully contributes to the atmosphere of tension and incipient violence, and Charles Nelson's, whose editing is immaculate. The timing of the end-title, in its relation to sound track as well as image, is a little triumph in itself.—*Lindsay Anderson*.

ABOUT MRS. LESLIE (Paramount). Plump, cheerful, middle-aged "Mrs." Leslie ambles around her Beverly Hills boarding-house, taking in her stride the various problems of her lodgers. Then, alone, she sinks into a chair, her face goes sad, tired, abstracted, and we flashback into her melancholy little past. She has been a nightclub singer and a partner in a dress shop, but the only "event" of her life was a strange, unfulfilled relationship with a lonely, wealthy man who didn't tell her his real name and was always summoned away from her by mysterious long-distance calls. . . .

If this quiet, attractive film never really rises above superior magazine level, it has moments of insight and a civilised, sympathetic quality rare in the contemporary American product. One is reminded alternately of Tchekov and of *Back Street*. *About Mrs. Leslie* renews the partnership of Hal Wallis (producer), Daniel Mann (director), Ketti Frings (screenwriter, this time adapting a novel by Vina Delmar) and the wonderful Shirley Booth. As in *Little Sheba*, the character is downtrodden and pathetically resilient, tender, anxious, self-deprecating—but it is in no sense a repeat performance, and if it proves anything, it is simply that this actress excels on a certain emotional wavelength. In the less rewarding part of Mr. Leslie, Robert Ryan is remarkably good. Some of the other roles are less well played, but there is a horribly shrewd portrayal of an American teen-ager by Eilene Janssen. Daniel Mann's direction again shows his theatre origins, and is sober and decent.—*James Morgan*.

ORSON WELLES

Micheál MacLiammóir

I AM surprised to find that I once, in print too, called Orson A Tree, and even caused the word to appear in italics; surprised, because when I read that Jean Cocteau, usually so penetrating in his imagery, had also decided he was a Tree, I found myself thinking Boloney. But then Cocteau had said he was a tree "full of birds and shadows," and no bird would venture near the Orson that I know, unless it were eagle or parrot bent on the one hand on his destruction, on the other on some shrill, pointless imitation; and shadows flee away at his approach. Not that he is always radiant. His own shadow, which has nothing to do with leaves, branches or birds, broods constantly within him, a dark turgid affair. It spreads when things go wrong (which they frequently do) from his chest, I think, chiefly, causing it to heave and swell like Mr. Rochester's in *Jane Eyre*, spreads again from those large and unexpectedly beautiful hands that nature, in one of her imitative moods when she visited Wisconsin on the day of his birth, borrowed from a Manchurian ivory; spreads finally through the rounded almond hazel of his eyes, causing them to appear bloodshot, as if he were being suffocated in a smoky room. Then he hunches himself up, a wounded resentful bull, and probably takes a plane to an unspecified hide-out in Tibet or West Wickham or where you will, and on his return all will be glowing and glutinous again, the cheeks like satin, the jokes pouring out of him in creamy cascades, the ponderous imperturbable basso-profundo elegance all back in place.

In private life, which with him as with so many actors is lived in snatches, he is the companion of the world. What impression in this sphere he makes on women I have not the faintest idea. His sort of eminence, the dominance of his personality, his restless appraising eye, his gallantry, his scorn of any coveted thing, these qualities, an essential part of him, do not equip him, to use a favourite expression of his own, to be a companion for women. Nearly all the women I have watched with him have been so occupied in his presence in preening and fluttering or in screaming and scratching, or in a studious indifference, that it has been of little use to ask them what, impersonally, they think of him. "Oh, he's so wonderful," they will breathe, or "Oh, he's impossible," they will hiss, and really it is surprising how right they are. He can be both wonderful and impossible, and often, being a born juggler, he will be both at the same moment, so that it seems natural, as one watches the wonders and the impossibilities spinning like mad through the air between his hands, that one should feel, as he doubtless intends one should, a little bewildered.

I suppose he has always been like that; I have known him since he was sixteen, when he first came, a complete stranger, to Hilton Edwards and me at our theatre in Dublin and said he wanted to act with us (which he did), and told us he had acted before in many places (which he hadn't), and the only absurdity about that was that the perfectly unnatural politeness with which we listened to this information seemed to convince him that we believed him (which we didn't). Wonderful and impossible he was that day, and wonderful and impossible he is being, I have no doubt, at this very moment as I sit thinking about him and wondering where he is and what he is doing.

Everyone knows what Orson looks like from the pictures he has made, and no synthetic noses, no false or genuine beards, no glittering helmets, turbans or Byzantine hats, no glittering uniforms or trailing fur-bedizened robes, rags or kilts can wholly disguise that soft and lumbering grace, that muffled, thunderous, gliding motion, as if he walked against a flowing stream. Yet I have never seen a stage or screen appearance that has given the whole essence of his personality, and this may be what causes the hesitation to apply that well-worn adjective Great to his acting. Some portion of him vanishes at the rise of the curtain or the soundless rolling of the camera: it slips away, skeddaddles round the corner, ducks for an instant like a boxer anticipating a blow. It is replaced for the period of action by a lesser, possibly a more popular, quality than itself, and only returns in full, a little sheepishly, in the richly vacant relaxation that follows all such efforts in all such actors. Then it is that the real Orson makes what to me is his triumphant and true reappearance, emerging through clouds of cigar smoke (for, like Mr. Rochester again, like Churchill, like my Gate Theatre partner, like so many men blessed and cursed with an overplus of gusty energy, he is an amateur of that vile weed), emerging, not with a sudden explosion as you might expect, but with a gradual burgeoning glow of light as if he strolled to meet you from a great distance, a lantern in his hand to find the way. There is usually a table between you and the remains of the last bottle of wine, and your surroundings may be sumptuous or sordid, the Piazza San Marco or some remote and nameless hostelry smelling of garlic and shell-fish, but wherever you are some idle phrase, some falling of the light, some stirring of the wind will be enough to kindle the magic of his talk. It is at its best a game, mutual and subtle: an audience, sitting silent and receptive merely, is not enough to strike the genuine gold. To these he will give a performance: the famous patter will bounce forth, the stories of Goldwyn, the memories of Hollywood and Dublin, Dietrich or poor Tom Kelly; card-tricks, hypnotised hens, the telling of the time within a two-minute radius and without a watch, imitations of Jews or Chinamen, plots for films or radio scripts, recipes for cooking, views on marriage, mysticism or monogamy and all the fun of the fair. No, conversation, not the conjuring trick, is his forte.

What do people really want to know of him? Most of the questions they could ask can be answered, most truthfully, with a simple Yes. Is he courageous? Yes. Is he imaginative? Yes. Is he an egocentric? Yes. Is he



"The Lady from Shanghai": Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth watch the shooting of a night scene.

generous, ruthless, forbearing, impatient, self-centred, sensual, naïve, sophisticated, hard-boiled, perspicacious, childishly credulous, well-informed, abysmally ignorant, superbly dense, uncannily perceptive? Yes. Is he clear-sighted, muddle-headed, polished, uncouth, trusting, suspicious, inquisitive, compassionate, relentless, gregarious, self-sufficient, affectionate, indifferent, cosy, desolate, gay, ominous, exhilarating, depressing, elemental, petty, fastidious, indiscriminating, self-critical, grandiose, supremely kind, unbelievably heartless?

Oh, yes.

Of course there are qualities he does not possess. Vanity is one, though his egotism dazzles the eyes; harshness is another, though his pronouncements, triumphant or despairing, threaten the ear-drums. The contradictions of his personality suggest, to me at least, simply that he is more like a multitude than a man, more like a city than a citizen, more like a landscape, in short, than a tree. (So Jean Cocteau and I were both, it may be, wrong about that.) His mind has its palaces and its slums, and in his soul there are mountains and marshes in the most unlikely proximity. The ironic part of his career is that what to me seem slum and marsh are the very qualities that the public, which has given him fame, prefers to the palace and the mountain, and that he himself in many ways seems to agree with the popular viewpoint. He has an unwholesome regard for his lesser gifts; his real ones thrust him on a tightrope. They fill him with a dreaded sense of solitude and uncertainty; there is no net spread out below to catch him if he should fall, and how much easier it is to sit, a potential abstract glittering design, all swinging legs and wisecracks, safe on the diving board and close to the abyss.

People have spoken of his cosmopolitanism, and he himself, with his way of life, his journeyings to and fro, his years in Italy, France and England, in Scandinavia and Morocco, can claim to feel at home in any country under the moon; yet he remains—and I think he is quite



Othello and Iago: Orson Welles and Micheal MacLiammoir in a scene from Welles' "Othello".



conscious of this—essentially an American. He is of the great turbulent school of intransigent romantics whose founder was Edgar Allan Poe and whose Flora MacDonald (for the school had its ups and downs, its leaders frequently, as we say in Ireland, “on the run”) was Isadora Duncan. No other country could have produced him, no other soil could have contributed the largesse of contradictions of which he is built, no other tradition could have given birth and breath to such a bear-like, lavish, unfastidious embrace of life. His faith in everything but fate is enough to proclaim him, his acceptance of the divine right of progress, his easy absorption in topicalities, his belief in the latest political cry, his disarming lack of cynicism on any subject, his passion for youth, for change, his reverence for the old and his dread of what may prove old-fashioned, his ever-present appetite for current information, all these qualities seem to me national ones, and the more characteristically national of all his traits lies in the fact that it is well-nigh impossible to attribute to him anything that isn’t, in one way or another, true. I said once somewhere that one could invent nothing about the United States; they themselves had done it already, and that this was why the story of George Washington, however unfounded in literal fact, was so easily accepted. Nobody can tell a lie in or about America. Visitors have returned to Europe with fantastic stories both grave and gay about the goings-on in that great country: the stories fade like morning dews before the truth. So it is with Orson. Was he really fifteen when he played the Duke in *Jew Suss*, and did some of the Dublin critics consider him a little mature for the part? Yes. Does he really go to bed at five and get up at six to work on the set all day? Yes. Did he really, on the eve before a gigantic spectacular production in New York, order a small pistachio ice-cream for his refreshment and find in all the theatre no single cent to pay for it so that he had to go unrefreshed? Yes. Did he send an actor twice to Rome from Casablanca by plane, for his benefit throw open a villa in Frascati for a month on both occasions, and provide a staff of six servants, merely in order that the actor should try on two pairs of tights and one tunic, never subsequently used in the production? Yes. Did he appear as Fortinbras dressed, over his armour, in the entire set from the Queen’s closet scene, causing panic to the already distracted staff who stood in the wings ejaculating: “There! I told you them bloody drapes wasn’t lost, there they are on Orson’s back!”? Yes. Did he really pour champagne into the Baltic and lie in the snow by the sea’s edge all Christmas night?

I have heard it: I have witnessed far more unlikely things.

The eccentricities of an exuberant man endowed with an overplus of the life force are, to me, neither symptoms nor affectation, as the acrimonious fish who have themselves failed to make an impression, and who form a surprisingly bulky portion of the community, will have it; nor are they necessarily indications of genius, as seekers for the miraculous will so eagerly claim. To gain a reputation for eccentricity, a popular figure of arresting personality has merely to be as completely natural as contemporary civilisation will allow: to succeed in convincing a startled public that these eccentricities are the outward signs of genius, the popular figure has merely to repeat them with

(Continued on page 52)

“Everyone knows what Orson looks like from the pictures he has made . . .” Above: Welles as Charles Foster Kane: centre, as the Turkish police chief of “Journey into Fear”: below, as Bayan, the Mongol warrior of “The Black Rose”.

"THE LIGHTER PEOPLE"

David Robinson

THE future of comedy is, like claret, unpredictable. *Punch* is the popular example of how one generation's humour will sour on the next, and later, perhaps, return to taste and favour. The same is true of comedy on the screen. The Marx Brothers, Keaton, Langdon—even, to some extent, Chaplin—were forgotten in the 'forties, and have now returned to grace, while the oblivion of Semon and Griffith seems permanent. Among the larger talents, Laurel and Hardy still remain outside the pale of the intelligentsia's recognition.

They had their day of cultural respectability; and some have never deserted them. After *Laughing Gravy* (1931), *The Music Box* (1931) and *County Hospital* (1932), hats were respectfully raised. But Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphonies forced them into feature-length comedies, which at first their invention could not sustain. Many turned their backs then, too soon to notice the success of their best features—*Way Out West*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Swiss Miss*. We took their huge output (two hundred films in twenty years) for granted, and at last forgot them, so that their final unhappy attempts at film-making and their disappearance from the screen passed almost unnoticed.

This is ingratitude. Laurel and Hardy have made too many films. They have made bad films; and they admit it themselves. They are neither of them geniuses. But they are very, very good clowns. And they have made a real, and characteristically unassuming, contribution to screen comedy.

II

When the partnership was formed, in 1927, Laurel was already thirty-seven and Hardy thirty-five. Each had learnt his job through twenty years' solid experience of the theatre and cinema. Stan Laurel (born Stanley Jefferson, at Ulverston, Lancashire, in 1890) began his theatrical career as a child; after hard years in the British music-halls, he finally joined the Karno Sketch Company, with which he went to America. When the company disbanded there in 1913, Chaplin, another member, went to work for Sennett, while Laurel went back to touring in vaudeville. In 1917 he, too, entered films, with Broncho Billy (G. M. Anderson) at Universal. His success as Rhubarb Vaseline in *Mud and Sand*, combined with Broncho Billy's irregular payments, led to a contract with Hal Roach. With Roach, he took an increasing interest in the technique of film direction, finally giving up a successful career as a solo screen comic to devote himself entirely to direction.

"Babe" Hardy (born in Atlanta, Georgia, 1892, Oliver Norvelle Hardy) began his theatrical career as a singer, having been originally intended for the law. In 1913 he was engaged by the Lubin Company, and, after various engagements, found himself at Vitagraph, where he acted and directed with Larry Semon. After Semon's death, Hardy, too, joined Roach.

Laurel and Hardy had acted together for Broncho Billy; about 1917 Hardy played the heavy in a comedy with Stan Laurel (*A Lucky Dog*, directed by Jess Robins). Their teaming, however, was the result of an accident. Stan was directing one of Roach's All-Star Series pictures, in which Babe was playing comic lead. Shooting began



on Monday, but on Friday Babe burnt his arm with boiling fat (the scars have survived with the partnership). Unwillingly, Stan, who had congratulated himself that his acting days were over, took his place. Babe returned before the picture was completed, and Roach decided that they should both stay in the film. Despite Stan's reluctance to resume an acting career, Roach persuaded them to make another film, this time as a team. "And then," they say, "another . . . and another. . ."

Their earliest films were made towards the end of the silent period; yet even the first seem to belong to the age of talking pictures. Their technique outdates by years that of their comic contemporaries. Such a film as *Leave 'Em Laughing* (directed by Clyde Bruckman, who made *Feet First* and *Movie Crazy*) looks forward with such determination to the talking 'thirties that it is necessary to keep reminding oneself that the film is, in fact, silent. The innovation is in the relaxation of the pace. Laurel had constantly fought to slow down silent comedy; in his earliest films there is evident an attempt to break loose from the furious cross-cutting inherited from later Sennett days; already he is experimenting with easy, lingering shots, depending upon leisurely and graceful mime. Teamed with Hardy, he slowed down slapstick two-reelers still more. The peculiar style of their comedy demanded this relaxed pace; Hardy may, for example, require as much as sixty feet of film to register a change of expression, and any acceleration of the process would spoil the comedy.

A year after their partnership began, sound came, Jolson sang, and the rest talked twenty to the dozen. Laurel and Hardy rode the wave imperturbably. With characteristic good sense, they asked themselves just why they should talk any more than they had been used to, merely because they could now be overheard. Not that they failed to make use of the new medium. The shrieking



"Way out West": "... the destruction may be inevitable, even dutiful."

and groaning jangles of the piano which they haul and drop down the interminable stairway in *The Music Box* is the last, the very last, word on the use of sound.

These were their great days. But this was also the time of their first feature-length films (*Jail Birds*, *Pardon Us*, 1931), and the first suggestions that their comic invention could not support a full-length feature. The suggestions were to be disproved. *Way Out West* is not only one of their most perfect films, but ranks with the best screen comedy; and others run it close—*Our Relations*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Swiss Miss*, *Blockheads*.

After *Blockheads* (1938), Roach ceased to produce for M-G-M, for whom all their films had been made since 1929. Other producers had not the imagination to leave them to their own wayward, extravagant but productive methods of creation. Without Roach they became like nomads; moved to R-K-O to make *The Flying Deuces*; then two final films with Roach, *A Chump at Oxford* and *Saps at Sea*; for Fox they made *Great Guns* and *A-Haunting We Will Go*; and then returned to make one more film for M-G-M—*Air Raid Wardens*. They went back to Fox, but never fulfilled their contract. After five more films, none particularly successful (the best from this period of decline was *The Big Noise*, made in 1944 by Malcolm St. Clair), they left the company. Their last film was made in France, with a French cast. Laurel and Hardy were horrified by the dilatory methods of production; Laurel was seriously ill during most of the time it was being made. It is not from modesty that he calls the film—*Atoll K* (*Robinson Cruseland*)—"that catastrophe."

III

The team is itself a joke, a cause of laughter. It is the old gag of Falstaff and his page—"the sow that hath overwhelm'd all her litter but one"—Belch and Ague-cheek, the Walrus and the Carpenter, Herbert Campbell and Dan Leno. And besides the fun inherent in their teaming, there is a constant striving after the grotesque—in their costumes and funny wigs, the donkeys they ride in *Fra Diavolo*, the pony sled in *Way Out West* on which the mountainous Olly is drawn by Stan and a minute donkey.

The contrast between the characters could scarcely be greater. Oliver is fine, round and juicy; Stan little and

dried up. Oliver is a grand, leisurely man with an elegant accent derived from the Southern States. Stanley is a fidgety, uncertain, timid little creature with an indefinable Lancashire-Cockney-Hollywood accent which only the English music-hall could father. "The battle . . . of Dither versus Dignity" the contrast has been described; but the association is too complementary ever to be accurately described as a battle.

Oliver Hardy—his basic costume and make-up were based on a cartoon character, "Helpful Henry"—always proposes and leads every enterprise. (It is interesting that the form of the majority of their films is the proposition of an enterprise; the progressive frustration of its execution; and its final catastrophic abortion, which leaves them where they were at the beginning, or even one unhappy step backwards.) Oliver gives the orders, explaining each step with a much-tried patience. He always knows best ("Well, I'm bigger than he is, so I think I *should* know best," he explains). As the "brains" of the partnership, he generally delegates the dirty jobs to Stan. Yet finally, sadly, inevitably, the misfortunes and ruin fall upon Oliver. Stanley—whose fault everything usually is—stands by unharmed, looking with helpless amazement upon the havoc he has innocently caused.

In contrast to Stanley's light-footed shamblings, Oliver is all elephantine elegance. His walk is assured, head in the air (with the consequences one might expect). His huge hands affect an elaborate grace; he has a way of ringing a doorbell which is like a courtly bow, and a courtly bow beyond comparison. He loads a cannon (*The Chimp*) with the same shop-madam delicacy as he brushes down the crumbling, moth-bald fur coat he wears in *Swiss Miss*. His conversation has the same elegance, and his small-talk is magnificent: "A lot of weather we've been having lately. . . ." A benign smile, and a pause. "Only four months to Christmas!" Pause. ". . . Do you believe in Santa Claus?" (*Way Out West*).

Most of Oliver's misfortunes are due to his inability to bend to circumstances. Instead he faces them full square; and usually falls flat on his back as a result. He remains magnificently unaltered in all situations. Up to his neck in water (*Way Out West*), he folds his arms in a typical gesture of annoyance.

Stanley is a clown in a much more recognisable comic tradition. His descent can be traced back at least to Grimaldi, with his "melancholy cast," grotesque costumes and greeting of "How are you tomorrow?"—recognisably in Laurel's vein of simple humour. The likeness between Stan and Dan Leno is remarkable; and we have actually



"Fra Diavolo": "... the most innocent of all the clowns."



The face of a clown: left, Dan Leno; centre, Stan Laurel as he appeared in "A Chump at Oxford"; right, Alec Guinness as Aguecheek in a production of "Twelfth Night."

seen Stan—unconsciously—perform one of Leno's gags: where Leno climbed on to a stable roof, thereby to enter and poison a horse—explaining to his unimaginative sister, who tells him the door is open, that no real burglar ever goes through a door. More remarkable still is this dialogue, which Shakespeare (or for that matter one of their own scenarists) might well have written for Laurel and Hardy:

Sir Andrew: Sir Toby Belch,—How now, Sir Toby Belch?

Sir Toby: Sweet Sir Andrew!

Sir Andrew: Bless you, fair shrew.

Maria: And you too, sir.

Sir Toby (aside): Accost, Sir Andrew, accost.

Sir Andrew: What's that?

Sir Toby: My niece's chambermaid.

Sir Andrew: Good Mistress Accost, I desire better acquaintance.

Maria: My name is Mary, sir.

Sir Andrew: Good Mistress Mary Accost. . . .

(Alec Guinness's interpretation of the part of Sir Andrew emphasised this likeness.)

Yet Laurel's truth to the tradition is not conscious. Of Leno, he says: "No, I never saw him; I've seen pictures, of course; he must have been a funny little guy. Yes, they tell me I look rather like him; but I never saw him." The likeness is not complete. Stan would never address an audience so familiarly as Dan: "Goodnight! Don't look so stupid! Don't!" For Stan is the extreme of clownish humility. He is the pure simpleton, to all appearances utterly vacuous. Well aware of his own limitations, he is content to teeter along behind his big companion and repeat and accept all his instructions. His witticisms and his moments of enlightenment are as accidental as his *sottises*—and surprise him quite as much. They surprise Oliver, too, who expects only nonsense from his partner, and so is never able to profit from his moments of light.

Unfortunately, as happens in real life, it is upon the more slender shoulders that responsibility is thrust. That is why it is always Stan who has left the key at home; Stan who is always accused: "That's another fine mess you've gotten me into." And it is he, who, with a look of the utmost self-satisfaction, will demonstrate his knowledge by telling the thieves where his money is hidden; who tumbles over the furniture and turns on the radio when they are themselves robbing a house at dead of night.

Stan is not, perhaps, so much a fool as a child. (In

Be Big his preparations for a day in Atlantic City consist in packing his toy yacht.) This child's innocence is a quality which Hardy shares with him, and which is, perhaps, the leading distinction of their comedy work. They are the most innocent of all the clowns; more innocent than Buster Keaton's single-minded hero, than Raymond Griffith, Lloyd or Leno; certainly more innocent than Langdon, in his slightly improper moments of first experiment. The motives which impel them have a childish logic; their jealousies and meannesses (they have been known to deceive each other) are mere babyishness. When Stan drinks (it is always Stan who drinks) it is about as vicious as a cigarette in the bathroom. In their films they are often given wives; but to them a wife is no more nor less than a kind of starch, unyielding, unsympathetic governess, to be deceived (in simple things), outwitted and escaped for the afternoon. Stan and Olly are, of course, always recaptured. Extra-marital interests are on the erotic level of taking an apple for the lady teacher.

Their world is not intended for innocents, however. "In this case the meek are not blessed. They do not inherit the earth. They inherit chaos. Chaos most active and violent and diabolical takes advantage of their inhibitions."¹ Tacks exist to be trodden on; banana skins to be slipped on; roofs to be fallen off; trousers to tear; beds to collapse; pianos to fall downstairs; windows and doors to be trapped in. But this is none of their seeking. They deplore it. "They are perhaps the Civil Servants of comedy. Nothing on earth would please them more than a quiet permanence in all things."¹ Admittedly, they are loved for their technique of mutual destruction: "for instance, as when they smash up Finlayson's house while Finlayson destroys their car. This technique is very elaborate, for each side waits patiently for the other to complete each item, thus ensuring a perfectly equal balance of destroyed property."² But this is not of their choice. That is Finlayson's fault; it is merely that they have not the finesse to escape such a situation. The destruction may be inevitable, even dutiful, but never orgiastic.

The things that happen in their world are above all things funny in themselves. James Agee has described

¹ John Grierson in *Grierson on Documentary*.

² Basil Wright: "Blest Pair of Sirens" (*World Film News*, June, 1937). James Finlayson (?1887—1953) appeared in many of their films: "... snouty James Finlayson, gleefully foreclosing a mortgage, with his look of eternally tasting a spoiled pickle" (James Agee).

the famous situation in *Swiss Miss*: "simple and real . . . as a nightmare. Laurel and Hardy are trying to move a piano across a narrow suspension bridge. The bridge is strung over a sickening chasm, between a couple of Alps. Midway they meet a gorilla." The same piano had earlier run amok through an hotel, careering of its own accord (perhaps Hardy had pushed it) across the top floor, down the stairs, through the lounge and entrance hall, out of the front door, down the steps and along the road, with Oliver roaring and Stanley whimpering after it.

IV

The success of all this comedy and nonsense is due, finally, to conscientiousness as much as talent. They propound a few basic comic principles, which they mean and which they stick to: "Keep a semblance of belief, however broad. Let your gags belong to the story; you must have a reason to motivate everything," says Laurel. Some years ago was published a brief dialogue, in which they put forward their theories of the basis of comedy:—

O.H.: The fun is in the story situations which make an audience sorry for the comedian. A funny man has to make himself inferior. . . .

S.L.: Let a fellow try to outsmart his audience and he misses. It's human nature to laugh at a bird who gets a bucket of paint smeared on his face—even though it makes him miserable.

O.H.: A comedian has to knock dignity off the pedestal. He has to look small—even I do—by a mental comparison. Lean or fat, short or tall, he has to be pitied to be laughed at.

S.L.: Sometimes we even feel sorry for each other. That always gets a laugh out of me. When I can feel sorry for "Babe."

O.H.: Me, too, when I can feel sorry for Stan.

A joke of Laurel and Hardy's is no transient thing. It is sniffed and savoured before use, then used, squeezed dry and squeezed again; smoothed out, folded up with care and put away ready for the next time. The same jokes recur again and again. *Be Big* was expanded into *Fraternally Yours*; the joke about shooting one's own foot sticking up at the end of the bed, under the impression that it is a foreign hand, turns up two or three times, and so on.

There are two reasons why Laurel and Hardy succeed in avoiding monotony, while employing such a limited

range of material. Firstly, they appeal particularly and consciously to the pleasures of *recognition* which have always been especially exploited in the music hall—in the use of catchphrases, of dialogue which becomes comic through its very familiarity. Laurel and Hardy's famous lines "Hard-boiled eggs and nuts," "Another fine mess"; Stan's cry, or the frequent sight of Oliver, prostrated and turning up his face in speechless appeal, may seem unfunny at first acquaintance, but gradually grow upon one until they are hilarious, irresistible, looked for and cherished.

Secondly, there is their seemingly infinite capacity for variation on a simple theme. Basil Wright described one example: "*In Aerial Antics the attempt to fix a wireless aerial on the roof of Laurel's house precipitated Hardy off the roof into a goldfish pond at least five times. Each time a different gag-variation appeared, until the comedy passed into the realms of cutting, and the final fall was but a flight of birds and the sound of an almighty splash. Eisenstein would have been proud to do it.*"²

The Music Box is better known. Throughout two reels they struggle to get a piano up a tremendous flight of steps. At last they reach the top, where a postman tells them it would have been easier for them to bring it up the back way. Gratefully they thank him, and toil back down the stairs to bring the piano up the easy way.

V

For all this, and though they themselves never altered, the quality of their pictures did decline. Their technique of film-making demanded conditions of the greatest independence. It is now known—as was long suspected—that the principal creative force behind the films was Stan Laurel. The ideas invariably betray the common influence. He always took a forceful hand in the direction, and it appears that the so-called director, particularly in the early days, was principally required to stand behind the camera while Stan himself was on the set. Finally, he closely supervised the editing.

Laurel considers that it is not possible to make a slapstick comedy by the usual method of discontinuous shooting. Therefore their films for Roach were generally shot in continuity—which must have been an expensive method.

(Continued on page 52)



Laurel and Hardy, with James Finlayson and Sharon Lynne, in a scene from "Way Out West."

A REVIEW OF REVIEWS

John Grierson

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "You often meet the gentleman in the hunting-field. At first glance he looks plausible, and even tolerably versed; but it soon becomes clear that he is irked by his own subtle difference from the rest of the cheerful, red-nosed throng. To make good, his countenance is forced to wear a perpetual sneer of contempt, like a Wilkie Collins villain. Irked further, he feels the need of a measure of self-importance. While coverts are being drawn, he sits disdainfully observant; in anxiety noting much, but wrongly interpreting (with outward assurance of correctness) every sight and sound. When hounds are running, he keeps well back with the old ladies, lest the Master's tongue should draw ridicule upon him. . . . He has a secret passion to be a Huntsman, but it is impossible because they (a) work for wages and are therefore vulgar, and (b) take chances and so come a whopping cropper every now and then. He makes a point of never opening gates for others (except for those he especially likes, when he takes them off their hinges) and of avoiding intercourse with the yokels who do. Jump anything? He knows better."

On the other hand, there is much in my correspondence and very complimentary, too, especially about Paul Dehn, Roy Nash, Virginia Graham, and a critic I did not know before—a young man called Frank Aicken, on the *Belfast Newsletter*. I am glad of the notice so patently given to Dehn. He has been sharp on one or two films from my own stable, but never, I thought, other than wisely sharp, and in the best spirit of criticism, with no skin off anyone's nose. I would, too, have expected mention of Nash who, on an afternoon paper assignment, writes with much consideration. Virginia Graham, of *The Spectator*, comes in, of course, because of her writing, which is racy and sure.

I welcome, naturally, this citation of the newer critics, for it is exciting, not only to know that they are there, but that they are being recognised. Exciting too have been pieces from young men who are not yet critics but who patently are not only seeing as many films as any of us, but are young enough, evidently, to make one envy the freshness of their critical enthusiasm. The President of the Oxford University Film Society, R. G. Hamilton, tells me, for example, that he reads anything from a dozen up to twenty reviews of any given film. His personal view is that there are only three critics he can always rely on to be impartial without any attempt to play to the gallery, and they are Dilys Powell, Campbell Dixon and Richard Mallett of *Punch*. "The last is perhaps the most scrupulously fair of any critic I know. Though his judgment may not be as profound as some, he is always sufficiently patient to look for and indicate some quality which other critics have casually discarded as without worth."

But now, I am afraid, to more negative matters. The generous Mr. Hamilton says that, in general, he dislikes the tendency to "ingratitude" among the critics. He read all of them on *The Maggie*, and was horrified to see only on the Sunday that William Rose had scripted it. "So if the script of an outstanding success be neglected, how much more can a modest success be overlooked." He cites the failure to take the measure of de Toth, director of many good Westerns ("He might make another Ford, *pace* L. Anderson"). Likewise he thinks Marquis Warren of *Hellgate* and *Arrowhead* underestimated. Mr. Anderson

comes in for an especial wallop from Oxford. "His blind adulation of Ford is a standing joke amongst us, and the last sentence of his Mogambo review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*—'there were many shots of gorillas which were probably difficult to obtain'—appears to be a desperate attempt to justify the master. This is laughable, but it ceases to be funny in *Critics' Choice*, which sums up *Shane* as 'almost as good as Ford'; nor is it amusing when one critic discovers that *Roman Holiday* was originally planned for Capra and the whole pack of them, thinking with tears in their eyes of *Mr. Deeds et al.*, said how much better it would have been in the hands of Capra."

Nor is Mr. Hamilton so very sure of me. Citing Lambert's "curt and savage" criticism of an Oxford University production as "bilious and synthetic," he points in contrast to the fact that Dilys Powell gave it serious and sympathetic consideration and, "though I should hesitate to say her review was better because it was more favourable, yet because she had made an intelligent attempt to assess its value and see what the makers were getting at, and encourage them, she was doing her duty nobly. I remember her also encouraging the amateur production of *Black Legend*; and I beg of you—if for these reasons alone—not to throw her to the wolves." Hell, how could I?

J. R. Dover of Kent makes a shrewd point that especially appeals to an old propagandist like myself. He hits at the critical trick many of us have often deliberately used as we rolled our various logs. Yes, he says, I am right in denouncing the critics who use criticism only to indulge in snatches of spiritual autobiography. "But a more balanced use of the first person is desirable for this other reason that there has been a tendency among a number of socially conscious critics to abandon the first person altogether, and imply that their personal prejudices should have universal validity." And who should he go after but my old friend Richard Griffith of the U.S.A., Paul Rotha's collaborator in the last edition of *Documentary Film*. "He is capable of saying that *Shoeshine* is not a good film because its political approach is 'dated,' or that the subject matter of a film is 'unacceptable' or 'not relevant,' when what he really means is that he personally doesn't approve of it. As someone who can take Eisenstein and Riefenstahl, I find the Griffith attitude depressing. . . ."

I have had only two pieces from professional critics. The first is to note the spirit of generosity in Beverley Baxter and Peter Burnup, and to say that they may be turning the tide on the intellectual Teddy boys who have recently been in the ascendant. The other is a considered piece on the handling of CinemaScope by the various critics. This interested me greatly. Through mental laziness, or a certain conservatism in regard to film æsthetic, I have been inclined with Sir Michael Balcon to be sceptical of the new technical tricks, and to enjoy the damaging and sometimes clever comments of Lejeune and the others. I like Cocteau's remark that the next poem he wrote would be on a *big* sheet of paper. But I was, for some reason or other, blown out of this attitude at the Cannes Festival. To exaggerate, it simply was not a film festival at all: it was somehow a bang-up, knock-out festival of sheer theatre with CinemaScope logically taking

its place as the most powerful aspect to date, not of a mania for technical contrivance, but of an actual movement towards theatre itself.

Now it is no use my saying that I'm not of the theatre, and am never likely to be, that I am a movie person as of nature, and so on. The point in objective criticism may be to examine if indeed there is this urge to greater theatre, and if so, to proceed to help determine its aesthetic. I doubt if we can estimate what CinemaScope is after, or likely in future to be after, without thinking back to the great German and Russian experiments in the 'twenties, which came closest to us in *The Miracle* and *White Horse Inn*, and in America jumped into the astounding spectacle of *Carmen Jones*. In other words, the critic who produced the crack that CinemaScope would end up by inventing the theatre may have been nearer to right than he imagined.

My correspondent points out that the theatre itself has tended to move away from photographic realism. "... There is no real competition with the realism of the cinema. On the other hand, there has been a type of realistic drama which was never at home on the commercial stage, but which paradoxically might find its logical development in CinemaScope."

My correspondent mentions Jean Jacques Bernard, and notes the remarkable point that his technique of extreme naturalism, intended for the highly intimate atmosphere of the small theatre, may only become truly intimate in terms of this new and sweeping medium, which puts the audience, as it were, so close to the proscenium. "In *The Robe* we were prepared for spectacle, but we were not at all prepared for the surprising moments of quiet intimacy."

Now I come to a matter of some delicacy. When SIGHT AND SOUND invited me to do this column outside normal editorial control, its editorial board were aware that in inviting the criticism of critics they laid themselves open to an equal treatment. They said so, you will remember, in introducing me on my last appearance. They trembled a little for the inevitable knife about to be thrown. Let me say at once that I thought, if only for that reason, that their invitation was not only a generous one, but the best assurance of the journalistic and critical courage of SIGHT AND SOUND itself. But, of course, the inevitable has happened. I had a thought that they expected me to wade in myself, but what has happened is that the knife has just whizzed over my shoulder. It comes, if you please, from Lady Elton, and it is about SIGHT AND SOUND's handling of documentary. This, I am sure you will readily believe, is a matter in which I can now afford to be pretty detached. The ships at Mylae were a long time ago.

Lady Elton goes right to the point. "Your enquiry into the work of the critics had better begin with the journal in which you launched the enquiry. . . . It seems axiomatic that the critics ought not either to fail to see, or to knock out in the first round, the creative young people whose eyes have something to reveal to British cinema. But to fail retrospectively to see is another matter, and introduces both an unscholarliness and a kind of confusion. Take the recent case of Stuart Legg. The reviewer of SIGHT AND SOUND accords to him the timid plaudits due to a young man one ought to watch for his promise. There is not a suggestion that Legg made any of *The World in Action* series, or had a hand in a very nice film called *Forward a Century*. Let me quote from the review on page 212. '*Powered Flight* seems to me as considerable an achievement in its own way as *Paris 1900*: one of the few instances in which material from diffuse sources has been so brought together that the result appears a valid historical record in its own right. . . . Stuart Legg won perhaps a slight concession to showmanship in such interludes (*sic*) as the brief sequence which cleverly and showily sums up

the 'twenties.' What kind of comment is this on Legg's unparalleled control of 'material from diffuse sources'? He virtually created the historical record of this kind, and for a mature evaluation of it one has only to go to the third edition of *Documentary Film* by Paul Rotha. SIGHT AND SOUND leaves us in some doubt as to the nature of the opponent from whom Legg 'won the slight concession to showmanship.' But I can only assume that if Legg's films were running monthly in seven thousand cinemas ten years ago, the showmanship has been around in his make-up for a long time.

"Now look at the article on Humphrey Jennings. It begins with a warm knowledgeability. 'Jennings' films are all documentaries, all made firmly within the framework of the British documentary movement. *This fact ought not to strike a chill*, for surely the 'creative treatment of actuality' should suggest an exciting, endlessly intriguing, use of the cinema; and yet it must be admitted *that the overtones of the term are not immediately attractive*. Indeed, it comes as *something of a surprise* to learn that this unique and fascinating artist was from the beginning of his career in films an inside member of Grierson's G.P.O. Unit. I hope you will forgive my italics. This kind of criticism, with its delicate pejorative, is naively insidious, and almost dangerous in its lack of comprehension. It is no surprise at all that Jennings' creative work in films was almost totally within the public service. The only surprise would have been if his particular vision had been financed elsewhere.

"It is, in my view, a slight to the several real poets in documentary to contend that Jennings was the 'only real poet.' Furthermore, whole units were often 'real poets,' tiresome and collective though this may appear. It was one of the remarkable things about British documentary that it both urged and accepted the co-operative nature of creative film-making, with the same instinctive generosity that is often found in a jam session."

So much for Lady Elton, and I am happy to say that this column is as open to my SIGHT AND SOUND colleagues as to any other. My only comment for the moment is that I warmly welcome and must defend the effort of a new generation to re-appraise the work of an older, no matter where the chips may fall. On the other hand, criticism in whatever generation must have its objective standards. The "concession to showmanship" in *Powered Flight* cannot be included among the pejoratives; in his excellent piece on Shell, Mr. Legg proudly announced that the Shell Unit is anti-showman. In fact, Mr. Legg asked for it.

Now, to cheer you up, I give you the most interesting criticism of the quarter. It comes from a gentleman emerging from a double programme which included *Valley of Song* and *Conquest of Everest*. "I liked the big picture," said he, "but that mountaineering job seemed a bit far-fetched." Then, of course, there was that line from one of the Critics on the B.B.C. the other Sunday. "I'm afraid," said he sadly, "I'm afraid I enjoyed it."

I asked, if you remember, for my correspondents to cite the talents they regarded as underestimated. Here is a first list: M-G-M cartoons, particularly *Cockadoodle-do*; *Scentimental Romeo*, another cartoon; UPA scripster Tee-Hee (*Little Boy Blew* and *Christopher Crumpet*); Georges van Parys (music from *Le Million* to *Belles de Nuit*); Maurice Cloche (*Monsieur Vincent* and *Never Take No For an Answer*); Alec Coppel (script-writer of *Obsession* and *Captain's Paradise*); the SIGHT AND SOUND team ("after all, they brought a breath of fresh air into film criticism").

And now, please send me some more; I would particularly like readers' views on the science fiction films. I have been most grateful to you for your letters. I am certain others will be grateful, too.



Popular programmes ; left, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in one of the "I Love Lucy" shows; right, filming a sequence for "Dragnet." Jack Webb (Sergeant Friday) is on the right.



SIX HUNDRED HOURS A WEEK

Philip Mackie

AFTER five weeks in New York, staring at that little TV screen, I take my pen and dip it in the blood that still streams from my eyes.

First, of course, the commercials. Newly arrived, I am fascinated by the pleadings, cajolings, hectorings: "*Have a Pepsi—NOW!*" I am charmed by the wide-eyed blonde who sells me cut-price detergents; by the patrician ease of Douglas Fairbanks Junior as he quaffs his well-bred beer. I revel in the dangling comparatives, the mysterious statistics, the even more mysterious negatives. "*It's three times better!*" (Better than what?) "*It's ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths per cent pure!*" (Pure what?) "*They're not made of rubber—they're not made of leather—they're not made of plastic!*" (Then what the devil are they made of?)

After a few days the charm wears off, and I do as the Romans do: reach out and turn down the sound, pour a drink, read the football results. Once the commercials have become habitual, they are not much more annoying—or attention-compelling—than trains passing at the bottom of the garden.

Advertising imposes stricter conditions on the writer than on the viewer. Every half-hour programme must be divided into two equal acts, to allow for the "middle break" commercial. Every hour-length play must be divided into three acts. Every act must end with a suspenseful situation and a big curtain-line, to hold the viewer rooted to his set through the commercial and into the following act. (Gillette has the luckiest, the most natural breaks: it sponsors boxing matches, with a commercial after each round.)

Putting the advertising in a separate box (as the I.T.A. will have us do in this country), what, then, is American TV like?

It is something like the universe of Soames Jenyns: "A scale descending by insensible degrees from infinite perfection to absolute nothing; in which, though we may justly expect to find perfection . . . yet it would be the highest absurdity to hope for it in all its parts."

Consider the statistics, and forgive the cautious answer. A New Yorker so inclined can watch television from seven in the morning until two in the morning, every day of the week. Before noon he has the choice of four stations, afternoons and evenings the choice of six or seven. On the altar of the consumer, each day the producers lay more than eighty hours of programmes. Six hundred hours of viewing in a single week: as much as is offered by four months of BBC television.

This vast acreage of time is manured by vast sums of money. The normal production cost of a half-hour play is about £7,000 to £9,000; for an hour play, about £14,000 to £15,000. NBC's *Your Show of Shows*, a revue running for an hour and a half every Saturday night, costs something like £40,000 a week to produce. True, the two stars take away more than £12,000; and true, the cost is so great that several advertisers share the burden and the glory of sponsorship.

Indeed, it is a sort of universe, where one finds some perfection, as well as everything else in the descending scale. Let me begin with my own choice of excellences.

Your Show of Shows seems to me to be money well spent. It triumphs in a field where the BBC has so far



Left, Ed Murrow interviews Sam Goldwyn for his "See It Now" series; right, Alistair Cooke at an "Omnibus" rehearsal; on the right are Natasha Parry and Peter Brook.

completely failed. It is intimate revue, with sketches, songs and dances; played by a small stock cast, all expert and all Protean; written and directed with a high degree of wit and intelligence, and with an absolute regard for the requirements of television. No rows of dancing-girls, no "big numbers"; lots of visual jokes, and all of them small, close-shot jokes, meant for the viewer and not for the studio audience.

Among the many good and near-good drama shows, each with its weekly half-hour or hour, the series presented by Robert Montgomery stands out. Most other producers strive to confine themselves to two or three chief characters, and two or three more-or-less elaborate sets. The result often looks like a stage play seen through opera glasses. Montgomery tends to use a modified film technique—after all, he was in films once—and creates movement and action, and a strong illusion of reality, by playing short scenes against a multiplicity of simple sets. It comes off very effectively.

"Illusion of reality" will do too for the filmed series *Dragnet*. The rolling title says: "*These cases are taken from the files of the Los Angeles Police. The facts are true: only the names have been changed.*" All right, I believe it, he believes it, we all believe it. Two plain-clothes policemen, dead pans and flat voices and sad eyes, dig patiently into the facts of burglaries, murders, disappearances, blackmail. "*The facts, ma'am. That's all we want, ma'am. We just want the facts.*" The dialogue is stripped down to its bones: terse questions and monosyllabic answers, with the film cutting from face to face with the speed of an early Grierson opus. The whole thing is as convincing and as tense as a novel by Simenon. The films are directed, and the chief part played, by a man called Jack Webb, formerly a little-known small-part film actor. Probably he'll have to spend the rest of his life being detective Joe Friday and hearing his own musical theme, which is a cousin of Harry Lime's: *DAH-de-dum-de-DAH!*

In the documentary-reportage class, Edward R. Murrow is head boy. His *See It Now* programme is expertly made up of studio comment by Murrow himself, "live" location

shooting by telecameras, and film sequences shot by CBS cameramen all over the world. Murrow knows the importance of now-ness on television. You see him in his New York studio asking the San Francisco telecameraman to pan round to the right: cut to the view of San Francisco harbour, with the camera slowly panning as requested. He has a variety of honest tricks at his command. For instance, he once had an interview with General Bradley shot on film in Rome, with Bradley holding a telephone and apparently answering Murrow's long-distance questions; then, in the show, Murrow intercut this with live scenes of himself in the studio, also holding a telephone, conducting the other end of the conversation.

This kind of sequence was the starting-point for Murrow's second programme, *Person to Person*. Here, Murrow sits in the studio and converses directly with people in their homes—an opera singer, a baseball player, a newspaper editor, Sam Goldwyn. It's a remarkable technical feat, not meant to kid you that Murrow is actually with the person, but intended to give the greatest possible sense of immediacy and intimacy. It may be worth saying that Murrow professes complete objectivity in his programmes, but that his objectivity is strictly liberal, internationalist and anti-reactionary.

There are a dozen other shows that deserve equal billing. The Ford Foundation's *Omnibus*, conducted by the gentle and masterful Alistair Cooke, turns up new pleasures every week: Kabuki dancers from Japan, a new play by Budd Schulberg, Captain Cousteau and his underwater cameras, W. H. Auden talking to T. S. Eliot. *Excursion* is a kind of junior *Omnibus*, presented by Burgess Meredith; my notes after viewing four shows read: "Modern art. Films on low-cost housing. Discussion—United Nations. History of jazz from New Orleans to bop." *The Author Meets the Critics*—title self-explanatory—is a panel-show which I love to watch but should hate ever to be involved in. *You Bet Your Life*, an alleged quiz programme, is great because Groucho is great because Groucho is Groucho. . . . And so on.

Let's turn to the middling-good, the not-so-good and the frankly awful. It is difficult to know where to start. Do

you like quizzes and parlour games? You have the choice of *Twenty Questions*, *Pantomime Quiz*, *I've Got a Secret*, *What's the Story?*, *Who's the Boss?*, *What's My Line?*, *The Name's the Same*, *Name That Tune*, *Place the Face*, *Down You Go*—plus the giveaway shows like *Double or Nothing*, *Dollar a Second*, *Beat the Clock*, *Break the Bank* and *I'll Buy That*.

Do you prefer domestic comedy? The fantastic success of *I Love Lucy* has inspired other producers to come up with *I Married Joan*, *Life With Elizabeth* and *My Favourite Husband*. Much in the same line are *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Ethel and Albert*, *Burns and Allen*, *Life of Riley*, *Meet Mr. McNutley*, *My Friend Irma*, *My Little Margie* and *Our Miss Brooks*; not to mention the old standbys *Life With Father* and *I Remember Mama*.

I Love Lucy deserves a digression, since it has never rated lower than the No. 1 position on TV popularity polls. The formula is tried and tested: charming scatter-brained wife and groaning, head-holding, long-suffering husband. Each week the wife's random energy plunges the family into a new painful-farcical situation, the stooge husband patiently restores the *status quo*—and Lucy turns out to have been right all along, often enough to reassure the women of America that feminine intuition is superior to masculine ratiocination. Curious readers can get a faint taste of the kind of thing by listening to the BBC's *Life With the Lyons* and *Ray's a Laugh*; but *I Love Lucy* is considerably better served by its scriptwriters, and Lucille Ball has enough uninhibited energy to rock Broadcasting House off its foundations.

Are your children science-fiction addicts? After the first lesson in button-turning they will be ready to divide their allegiances between *Superman* and *Captain Video*, between *Space Patrol* and *Tom Corbett*, *Space Cadet* and *Rod Brown of the Rocket Rangers* and (newest and most portmanteau title of all) *Rocky Jones*, *Space Ranger*.

And so on and so on, for "playhouse" shows, variety shows, crime thrillers, Westerns, soap operas, fashion and beauty and cooking, boxing and wrestling, news and weather, forums and panels and interviews. There is much too much of everything. But of course you don't have to look at it. The first fine careless rapture of viewing is pretty well over now. The TV sets in Third Avenue bars are dumb and dark; the patrons have gone back to the more serious business of drinking. Most families have learnt to ration themselves—even if their voluntary diet is still too rich for a healthy stomach.

The struggle goes on, to capture the attention of 27 million TV sets: hour against hour, programme against programme, network against network—plus some interesting backstage tussles, like networks against syndicates, film against "live," New York against Hollywood. The struggle causes many excesses and much waste.

But it is this effort to outshine, out-entertain, out-educate and out-prestige the rival network or station—besides, of course, the availability of so much time and so much money—that permits and encourages the existence of original, off-beat and minority programmes. If the American networks were reduced to a decorous British five hours a day, I must believe that they would throw out most of the baby and keep a good deal of the bath-water.

"Look here upon this picture . . ." Maurice Evans and Ruth Chatterton in a scene from "Hamlet," as presented on the "Hallmark Hall of Fame" programme.

Consider the ratings, and remember that ratings are responsible for more American ulcers per week than any other single cause. When I left New York, the ten top-ranking shows were as follows (though not in this order). Four "situation comedies": *I Love Lucy*, *Burns and Allen*, the *Milton Berle Show*, *Our Miss Brooks*. Four comedy-variety shows: the Martin and Lewis *Comedy Hour*, the Jackie Gleason Show, *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, *Arthur Godfrey and Friends*. One comedy-quiz: Groucho's *You Bet Your Life*. One crime thriller: *Dragnet*. These would be certain of survival; so would *Cisco Kid* and *Wild Bill Hickok*, *Foreign Intrigue* and *Boston Blackie*. Since not many of these programmes are designed to suit my personal taste, I must thank heaven for the vastness which can also include *Opera Theatre*, *Studio One*, *Meet the Press* and *Johns Hopkins Science Review*.

I should mention one other component of the rich full diet. New York stations run a total of about fourteen feature films a day. This must be the best market British films have ever found in the States. In one week I could have seen (with the titles running off the edges, of course, and actors with no tops to their heads) *The Ringer*, *The Small Back Room*, *Night Beat*, *Poison Pen*, *Kipps*, *The Years Between*, *They Came to a City* and *2,000 Women*. I could also, I regret to say, have seen Mr. Pastry, and *Josser Joins the Army* and a number of other epics from the dark ages.

The love-hate battle between TV and films seems to be settling down to a grudging give-and-take, with television doing nearly all the taking. The feature companies are releasing more and more of their fairly-recent, fairly-good films for TV showing. TV is tempting more and more Hollywood stars to try their luck with a series of vidpix:



William Bendix, Ray Milland, Robert Cummings, Brian Donlevy, Ray Bolger and Eve Arden are all doing well at the new game.

A steady progression is going on. More TV shows are being put on film; the difference in production cost is negligible, the general convenience is greater, the fear of fluffs and errors is eliminated, and the final product can be shown and re-shown without any loss of quality through all the different time-zones of the United States. So more and more TV production is moving from New York to Hollywood, since only Hollywood has the facilities for the mass production of television films. In Hollywood itself, the relative importances are changing: the production of TV programmes is no longer a cadet branch (like radio) of the feature-film business, but has become a major industry in its own right.

Seventy per cent of all Eastman Kodak negative stock now goes to make TV films. The biggest Hollywood producer of vidpix, the Hal Roach organisation, is turning out more footage than M-G-M, 20th Century-Fox and Warner Brothers put together. Hollywood now makes about four-fifths of all the TV films shown in the States; the remaining fifth is furnished mostly by New York, and the rest by Europe.

The New York networks' and agents' offices are knee-deep in producers anxious to make vidpix in Europe and reap a rich harvest from the fields of golden corn. But so far only one European series, *Foreign Intrigue*, has had a real and continuing success. *Foreign Intrigue* is produced in Stockholm and Paris by Sheldon Reynolds, a young American who started as a CBS scriptwriter, and who displays a remarkable talent for composing variations on a slender theme: the adventures of a roving reporter in twentieth-century Ruritania on the fringes of the Iron Curtain.

Reynolds belongs to the school of producers who make their films look like films, with chases and running fights

shot against location exteriors. Another school tries to reproduce on film the virtues and limitations of the "live" show. Some producers of comedy films go to the length of dubbing in laughter and applause on the sound-track. This is an insult to the viewer which should be punishable by death. Groucho Marx, the keenest intelligence of our times, gets the best of both worlds: he acts his show in front of a studio audience just as if it were being televised "live," and simultaneously films it, then simply cuts out the sub-standard or censorable gags.

Feature-film Hollywood can set one small gain against its losses. To help win back a nation of viewers, it is taking the new stars ready made by television, and building full-length films on the lines of their TV programmes: Vincente Minnelli's *The Long, Long Trailer*, with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz of *I Love Lucy*; *Dragnet*, with Jack Webb and his sidekick Ben Alexander. Other TV heroes will no doubt tread the same path to the cinemas: the new comedians like Jackie Gleason, Sid Caesar, Red Buttons; the new charmers like the dimpled pianist Liberace.

My own small plea is that the cinema should immortalise a certain Henry Morgan. Morgan is a sign that American television is so rich that it can even afford a court jester. His thoroughly jaundiced view of life comes as a welcome nightly purge after over-indulgence in space-ships and soap operas. He has a creditable record of losing sponsors because he persistently referred to their products as "foolishnesses," or became so busy talking about something else that he completely forgot to deliver the commercial. The last time I saw Mr. Morgan on the TV screen, he was staring at me bad-temperedly with his nose pressed against a plate-glass window. "*They tell me TV gets me looking right into your living-room,*" he announced. "*Hey, pretty crummy living-room you've got there, haven't you? Can't say I admire your taste in furniture. And what kind of store did you buy that wallpaper from?*"



Bette Davis makes a guest appearance on Jimmy Durante's television programme.

Book Reviews

CHILDREN AND FILMS, A Study of Boys and Girls in the Cinema. A Report to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees on an enquiry into children's responses to films, by Mary Field. (Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. 10s. 6d. or \$2.)

Reviewed by Janet Hills

Evidence of children's reactions to films is sometimes collected rather far from the source; it emerges out of questioning, or is filtered through adult observation. But Miss Field, in her investigations for the Carnegie Trust, has used infra-red photography to pin down immediate responses. Members of different audiences, caught unawares, have been transfixed at pre-selected points in their film-watching, so that their attitudes and expressions can be studied at leisure.

At the centre of the report are 40 film stills matched with 390 photographs of children, always the same small group in each audience. One of the programmes chosen for the experiment was made up of special children's films; the other was drawn from the best commercial "U" films available to the cinema clubs. These programmes were shown in places of sharply differing character: Barnstaple, Camden Town, Chippenham, Dunfermline, Hull and Middlesbrough. In the English towns, the photographs were taken at Saturday club performances; Dunfermline provided five audiences—four from different types of community, and one of less than average educational attainment—all of whom came to the cinema in school hours.

The Carnegie Trust enquiry, like C.E.F.'s earlier experiment with infra-red photography, had a clear technical purpose. The moments for photographs were picked to illuminate questions of film-making. As Miss Field says, after quoting some of the Wheare Committee's remarks about research: "*the time was ripe for a new type of enquiry into the response of children to films, not merely negative investigation into the possible effects of adult films on the under-twelves, but positive research into the principles underlying the production of Entertainment Films specially designed for children.*" The material of the report may be put to other uses, but the different experts have been left to make their own deductions. It will be for them to decide whether such evidence can help to clarify the wide psychological and social problems to which the Wheare Committee drew attention.

Children are an enigmatic new public; and whereas a theatre company can feel and meet their response at the moment of performance, films are insensible. At times the photographs supply the kind of evidence which actors collect on the spot. Miss Field draws her own practical conclusions, showing how different tastes emerge, and pointing to marked differences between groups. Clearly such records are of considerable interest to anyone who makes children's films. The purpose behind the enquiry is constructive and wise, although one must bear in mind that too fixed a preoccupation with audience reactions may have a constricting effect on entertainment. The work of the Children's Film Foundation always seems best when the knowledge of children which underlies all its production is used with the least apparent calculation.

The photographs, which are supplemented by records of the children and comments from observers at the performances, leave vivid impressions of individuals and groups. Unsensational and subtly varying, they form a good antidote to the large, vehement generalisations which young filmgoers sometimes provoke. Since each group is shown at many successive moments in a programme, attitudes and expressions may be seen changing, and some faint picture of a child's whole response may emerge. All this visual evidence is made available to us without any fallible human mediation.

There must, however, be human interpretation, and here the very precision of the method has its disadvantages. A moment's watching is neatly isolated and set beside its film still, but the audience's reactions flow on. Sometimes an emotion may linger from one shot to the next, as in the case mentioned by Miss Field where children respond to the smile of a small boy who appears on the screen immediately after a much-appreciated close-up of food. At other times it seems impos-

sible to disentangle one particular strand from the rest of a reaction. For instance, among the stills from the adult Western, *Comanche Territory*, is one labelled "feminine success." It shows Katie kicking her pursuer off the wagon, and the point for consideration is: "*Will the girls react differently from the boys at this feminine achievement?*" But one will never know whether the small boy who seems about to swallow his hand is impressed by Katie's prowess or just excited by some good strong action. Altogether, even with the explanations in the report, the short label attached to each still seems inadequate to convey the exact and full content of each moment, and the response may at times be governed by something which has eluded definition. Nevertheless, though such difficulties abound, the photographs undoubtedly have power to stimulate and suggest.

Of course only a fragment of each audience can be studied, but even so one occasionally catches signs of inter-acting responses. In a comment on one photograph Miss Field notes that, "*to be frightened of incidents may be a temporary fashion among small groups of little girls who go to the pictures in a body, and the emotion may be caught by boys near them.*" The influence of members of the audience on each other is a fascinating field for study, and originally Miss Field planned to record the reactions of young filmgoers in the company of adults as well as those of children on their own. This scheme, however, had to be abandoned. As it is, the enquiry has yielded material in which Miss Field, bringing her specialised knowledge to the interpretation, sees "*definite suggestions for the construction of children's films.*" The next step is to discover how far it satisfies other experts, particularly psychologists; the photographic evidence is available to everyone, but we do not yet know who will be able to use it, or to what extent records of this kind can produce valid results.

Before further projects are undertaken, the method of research will presumably have to be evaluated—but if Miss Field later proceeds to the investigations, "*with adolescents, then with backward peoples and finally, perhaps, with adult filmgoers*" foreshadowed in her memorandum to the Carnegie Trustees, perhaps she would include an audience of critics, so that their reactions at certain key moments may be compared with what they write afterwards.

SCEAL NA SCANNAN (The Story of the Films), by Proinsias O'Conluain. Illustrated. (Government Publications Department, Dublin, 7s.)

Reviewed by Liam O'Laoghaire

The appearance of the first book on the cinema in Gaelic is an event of some significance. In the first place, it indicates that the Gaelic revival is breaking away from the pietistic preoccupation with the past which marked its earlier stages; and that young writers are today adapting the expressive resources of the language to deal with matters of contemporary interest. Moreover, Mr. O'Conluain, with his keen appetite for the cinema and a real capacity for original research, has produced a book which is valuable and interesting in its own right.

While the book is, for the Gaelic reader, a useful introduction to the art and history of the film, the author has, inevitably, related the story to the situation prevailing in his own country—where, unfortunately, enthusiasm has too often been stifled by the shortsightedness and complacency of officialdom. Two events have obviously been singled out for detailed treatment. In 1909 James Joyce arrived in Dublin to open and manage the first regular commercial cinema there; in 1910, a film production centre was established near Killarney, under the direction of Sidney Olcott, with members of the American Kalem Company.

For the rest, the book is a valuable source of information about the cinema in Ireland; it includes a twenty-one page list of films made there; a pioneer glossary of technical terms in Gaelic; and a list of historical films preserved in the National Library in Dublin. Mr. O'Conluain points out that no film so far made in Ireland is of sufficient artistic importance to justify serious analysis; this realistic observation in itself suggests an attitude which may well bring nearer the day when Ireland realises her full responsibility as a producer of films with original, native content and feeling.

THE SOUND TRACK

At the beginning of the sound period, film music was dominated by the theme song tradition, and incidental music almost disappeared. By the mid-thirties, the large symphonic score had begun to be used, and a substantial orchestra was normally used for accompaniment, until Carol Reed introduced the zither in *The Third Man*. Recently, *High Noon* and other films have re-established the dramatic use of the theme song. Currently, film music follows the three lines of the theme song, the heavy orchestral score and the simple sound.

Thus, in the contemporary gramophone repertoire, the integral theme song is illustrated by a direct imitation of the *High Noon* style in two songs from *Bang You're Dead* (Parlophone R3824). The fruity voice of Edmund Hockridge (of American stage musical fame) records a title song, with muted trumpet and rhythmic accompaniment. "Lazy Day," another song from the film, starts with whistling to a guitar accompaniment, leading to more muted trumpets and a dull tune like a thin echo of a number from *Oklahoma*. *Forbidden Cargo* is represented by "Actualités," a breathy, French guitar song; it is recorded by Theodore Bikel in the "tight" style of an early Jean Sablon. (H.M.V. B10701.)

The orchestral score, despite challenges, retains its basic position. A melody from *Conflict of Wings*, by Philip Green (Parlophone R3862) shows no concession whatsoever to the new developments. The same massed strings carry a sickly tune; even the soulful solo violin is heard, tugging at the heart-strings in the upper register, with a touch of echo for good measure.

As tedium closes in, a remarkable work comes along from the field of television. When NBC produced a series of 26 half-hour television films under the title *Victory at Sea*, they commissioned Richard Rodgers to write the music and Robert Russell-Bennett to orchestrate. This often-despised Hollywood system has vindicated itself here, for the richness of the Rodgers melodies, many of them extremely beautiful, is shown off to the greatest orchestral effect by the excellent work of the arranger-orchestrator. A full hour of the music has been recorded by the NBC Symphony Orchestra on an American R.C.A.-Victor long-playing record; it is noisy, heavily-scored, flamboyant film music at its best. Unfortunately, only a diluted version of two of the principal themes is available in Great Britain; they are "Song of the High Seas" and "Guadalcanal March," by Ron Goodwin and his orchestra (Parlophone R3855). The first side begins with two swirling musical waves on strings, woodwind and rolling cymbal, followed by mixed brass fanfares and a statement of the main "sea" theme; some important percussion effects are missing in the English recording. The great four chords and the timpani beats that follow led (in the original film series) to the link phrase "And Now," heard on B.B.C. television for 25 weeks last winter. It carried an effect similar to the cry "The March of Time" in another example of American screen journalism. After some orchestral tremolo, an ominous brass theme associated with war at sea is heard, leading to more musical waves and a restatement of the opening phrases. "Guadalcanal March" opens with a crisp theme, played four times with increasing orchestral embellishment. A Sousa-style piccolo ripples over the quieter middle section, followed by a horn echo of a second theme, over which the opening tune vibrates. A lovely contrapuntal effect between the two tunes in the American recording is completely missing at the end of the Parlophone version.

Simple sounds are perhaps best represented in the current collection by John Addison's rollicking tune for *The Maggie* (Parlophone R3827). This composer has shown a good grasp of film orchestration over a number of pictures, particularly in his use of brass and percussion. He managed to obtain freshness in the "busy" music for the opening dock scenes in *The Pool of London* by a simple sustained bass rhythm, an idea developed in the drum beats for *Seven Days to Noon*, and finally carried to extremes in the gliding timpani of *The Man Between*. *The Maggie* makes great play with a very simple tune in a setting for concertina and tuba. Each phrase is crystal-clear, full of atmosphere and, by its lack of musical pretensions, quickly absorbed and immediately effective.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

Le Salaire de la Peur

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—May I raise some objections to the opinion of your reviewer Karel Reisz that in *Le Salaire de la Peur* Clouzot fails on every level except that of the thriller, that "nowhere does he commit himself to any sympathy (much less compassion) which might have given point to the stress he lays on physical and mental anguish"?

The mood of all Clouzot's films is despair relieved only by faint and transitory glimpses of sympathy between men. But the sympathy is as essential to his vision as the despair; indeed, in *Quai des Orfèvres* and his script for that film (the title eludes me) with Raimu as the drunken lawyer, the compassion is quite blatant. The real terror in *Le Salaire de la Peur* comes not from the ugly detail which Clouzot records with such loving self-torment, but from his realisation that to violate the loyalties which connect one with someone else is self-destructive and yet may be necessary. Mr. Reisz mentions one of the key incidents of the film (Mario's victory by a foul "to save time") as though it were merely a piece of wanton amorality. But to get the lorry through, Mario needs Jo's co-operation; since Jo is going to pieces he can only have it by breaking him completely and taking the last step from friend to master; and to do this it is the simple truth that he has no time to fight fair. At this point Jo ceases to be "Al Capone with cold feet," a tough guy one rather enjoys seeing expose himself, and becomes a broken human being who invites pity. Mario becomes a prisoner of the obstacles of the road; each costs him more than the last, and yet must be overcome if he is to receive any recompense for what has cost him too much already; beginning by merely risking his life, he ends by losing his humanity. The climax of the film is the strange and poignant scene where the two of them, after the destruction of every bond of loyalty or respect, meet again when meeting is impossible, huddle together because they cannot endure the solitude imposed on them by their own acts.

Clouzot is incapable of conceiving that anyone can do more, among the miseries of existence, than preserve his dignity as a man and a few elementary human decencies. But these values are real to him; is it not rather surprising that, in this supposedly brutal and cynical film, three out of the four drivers are permitted to finish their lives without losing their self-respect?

Yours faithfully,

A. C. GRAHAM.

School of Oriental Studies,
Malet Street, W.C.1.

Stroheim and Welles

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—Mr. C. S. Spencer's comparison between Erich von Stroheim and Orson Welles (April-June SIGHT AND SOUND) touches off a very interesting subject for debate. As regards strength of personality, antipathy towards commercialism, originality and a propensity both for the bizarre and the grandiose, one would definitely agree that these are qualities which are shared by both. Moreover, further points of similarity between them are these: a perceptive imagination, sensitivity, showmanship—degenerating occasionally into a desire to shock (viz., Welles's startling aural and visual tricks in *Citizen Kane* and Stroheim's potent erotic symbolism in *Queen Kelly* and *The Wedding March*)—and a total absence of what is known as "the light touch."

Where I would suggest they part company is on these two points. Firstly, technique. Whereas Welles sometimes wallows in technical virtuosity, as in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (this is not cited necessarily as a fault), there is no evidence to show that Stroheim has ever indulged in technique for its own sake at all (taking into consideration the fact that photographic technique in his day was not so advanced as it is now).

The second point of dissimilarity goes rather deeper: it is a question of approach. Whereas Welles's approach is ostensibly that of an intellectual individualist, Stroheim's approach would seem to mark him out as a sensual perfec-

tionist. To my mind, Welles's style is less laboured and more subtle and ingenious than Stroheim's . . . on that point, though, opinions vary; but, in any case, the differences between the two of them are greater than one might at first be led to believe.

Yours faithfully,

CHRISTOPHER K. ALLEN.

7 Southwick Street, W.2.

Welles and the British Tradition

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—In his lecture at the Edinburgh Festival (SIGHT AND SOUND, January-March), Mr. Orson Welles said, "*England is the only film industry without a tradition. They were making films in Stockholm, Budapest and Copenhagen forty years ago, but they were not making them in London.*"

Nothing could be more inaccurate. By 1914 the British industry was well established. The Williamson studio at Hove had already influenced continental producers. From Hurst Grove, Walton, Cecil Hepworth had for several years exported films to America. Hepworth Picture Plays were known throughout the world, and Mr. Hepworth's stars (and they were real film stars) were to be seen on posters all over London's Underground stations. . . . John Bunny came here to be filmed as Mr. Pickwick. Griffith came here to make *Hearts of the World*. Films were made under arc lamps long before 1914 at Esher, Walthamstow, Croydon, Ealing, Shepherd's Bush, Surbiton, Sheffield and many other studios.

It is annoying to find American actor-producers coming over here and telling us that we have no traditions. Maybe tradition is all we do have, but what a tradition our industry can claim! Mr. Welles has only to glance through the admirable histories of Miss Rachel Low and Mr. Roger Manvell to learn the truth. He will see that Robert Paul was making films on the roof of the Alhambra Theatre before the genius of Orson Welles saw the light of day. By 1914, Mr. Hepworth's sound films were showing in New York. . . . An Englishman had shown Edison how to synchronise sound with his peep-show machine. Le Prince, the Frenchman who mysteriously vanished, had made some of the world's first films in Leeds. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson had starred in a feature film of *Hamlet*. And Friese-Greene—well, some say he *invented* motion pictures.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN MONTGOMERY.

Lydd Cottage,
Little Heath Lane,
Cobham, Surrey.

Glasgow Rock

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—I am grateful to SIGHT AND SOUND for creating a situation in which John Grierson is forced to prove all over again

that his is the most formidable mind that has ever addressed itself to the cinema. And to John, for bouncing a hard lump of Glasgow rock off all our heads.

"Never the criticism, always the discovery."

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD GRIFFITH,
Curator, Film Library.

The Museum of Modern Art,
11 West 53rd Street,
New York.

Double Viewing

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—Whenever I buy a symphony on gramophone records I find I am unable to enjoy it on the first hearing, as I find myself invariably occupied with listening for undue surface hiss, mistakes in recording and faulty rendering. Only when I have satisfied myself that none of these exist, can I sit back and enjoy the music.

I am worried, however, because I find that I am unconsciously adopting this habit in my appreciation of a film. At the first viewing I am too busy watching for back-projection and listening for bad recording to enjoy or criticise its direction, camerawork and acting. Apart from making this "double viewing" procedure very hard on the pocket, it is most disconcerting for me, because one of these days I am sure to pick up a copy of SIGHT AND SOUND and be unable to read it until I have scrutinised every page for printing errors.

I wonder if critics experience this trouble and, if so, what their cure is?

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP JENKINSON.

13 Edale Grove,
Sale, Manchester.

The Tragic Pursuit of Perfection

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—I should like to point out that a comment to the effect that *The Tragic Pursuit of Perfection*, directed by Enrico Fulchignoni, was less historically sound than other productions mentioned, was inserted into my review of *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci*. These and other changes were made without my knowledge.

Yours faithfully,

PATRICIA HUTCHINS.

5c The Boltons, S.W.10.

CORRECTION. Mr. Patrick Jenkins has pointed out to us certain inaccuracies in our reference to the film *The West Window* (In the Picture, January-March issue); (a) the film's title is now *Lease of Life*; (b) it is not, as described, a melodrama, but a story of a country parson; (c) though the script, as stated, is by Eric Ambler, the original story is by Frank Baker and Patrick Jenkins.

The Seventh Art

I see no reason why this country cannot become the Hollywood of the television world. (Mr. Gammans, the Assistant Postmaster-General.)

★

A cinema operator who wanted to "overfulfil his production plan" ran a two-hour feature in 70 minutes, the Hungarian trade union newspaper complains. (*The Evening News*.)

★

Jack Pennick, former Marine sergeant who trained Pharaoh's army for *The Egyptian*, has had a new job thrust upon him. He has been assigned to train 100 Vestal Virgins for their duties in the Temple of Aton sequence in the same picture. (*Variety*.)

★

Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love, has been "reduced" to 20th century specifications by John More, property master at Warner Bros. studio. All authentic statues of Aphrodite or the Roman Venus are too wide at the hips to conform to modern standards of feminine beauty—so the classic figure has been slimmed for her "part" in *Helen of Troy*. However, Hollywood's Aphrodite will still follow the general type initiated by Praxiteles. . . . (Warner Bros. publicity hand-out.)

The American film company making *Helen of Troy* have included a small air-conditioner in their specially built wooden horse. (*The Daily Sketch*.)

★

Can you make a successful prestige picture of a quality high enough to set before the Queen—and yet include not a single kiss in it, nor the sight of a glamorous woman? Major Daniel M. Angel, head of Apollo films, thinks you can, and to prove it he's filming *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*. . . . (Publicity hand-out.)

★

A film is to be made of the life of actress Jean Harlow. . . . Who will play the lead role? Producer Samuel Bischoff says he is trying to find a girl born in the year Miss Harlow died, a new girl unknown to pictures, but with Miss Harlow's combination of talent and beauty. Failing that, says Bischoff, he will settle for Marilyn Monroe. (*The Daily Express*.)

★

The B.B.C. has banned the title song from Jane Russell's new film *The French Line*—because it would advertise a shipping company. (*The People*.)

("THE LIGHTER PEOPLE," Continued from page 42)

They went on the set with a basic idea and an outline of the "business" they were to introduce; but the main work of creation was done on the set. The actual "business" and its timing were worked out in accordance with the reactions of the informal audience of technicians and the like who were on the set.

Laurel's editing technique was unusual, and made possible only by his method of continuous shooting. The film was fairly finely cut as it was shot; so that at every stage Laurel and Hardy could see an approximation to the final version, up to the point they had reached in shooting. The timing and editing of the final version were reached, however, only after the reactions of preview audiences had been carefully studied.

The aim of Laurel's film technique appears therefore to have been to approximate the conditions of creation to those of the live theatre. Roach alone seems to have recognised the eventual economy of giving them the degree of freedom demanded by such methods; and in the big studios they were frustrated. With writers and directors haphazardly delegated to their films, regardless of their suitability or sympathy, the decline was inevitable.

VI

Laurel and Hardy make no films today, though they

would almost certainly be prepared to start again, given the chance to make them in their own way. They are both sexagenarians, men of great charm and courtesy, both seeming much younger than their real age in their gaiety and continued interest in their work. Each retains, after nearly thirty years, a boundless admiration for the comicality of the other. In refutation of Basil Wright's surmise that their film-making "*must be a solemn, serious and probably bad-tempered process*," they describe the shooting of *Leave 'Em Laughing*. "We had a scene where we're together on a bed. We went on the lot the first day, got up on the bed and started laughing. We laughed so much we couldn't stop. So we weren't able to shoot anything that day. Next day we went back, got up on the bed, and the same thing happened again. So we weren't able to shoot anything that day either."

At the moment they are in the course of a prolonged music hall tour of this country—their third since the war. And it is amazing to see how little, if at all, they are forgotten by their public, after their long absence from the screen. In the Palaces and Empires their first appearance—wandering in and out of two doors, always just missing each other, Olly waving his bulbous umbrella in greeting to the audience, Stan smiling coyly—is invariably greeted with yells of joyful and loving recognition. And Laurel and Hardy seem to regard that as gratitude enough.

(TOLSTOY ON FILM, Continued from page 20)

him!" she replied to my reproaches. "Then at least let people believe that I have been with him!"

Sophia Andreyevna's film associations went on after Tolstoy's death. She wrote in her diary for November 28th: "Health better. Anna Ivanovna Maslova, the cinematographer Drankov and the correspondent Spiro have come. . . ." Could it have been at this conference that Drankov asked for Sophia's approval of his "biggest deal" relating to Tolstoy? Tolstoy was not long in his grave before a film entitled *A Peasant Wedding* "written and personally directed by Tolstoy" was released by Drankov in Russia, and purchased for world distribution by the Italian company, Cines. That Count Tolstoy had "personally directed" this film ("No theatrical properties! Only exteriors!") a bare two months before his death was a publicity angle not neglected by the distributors. The widowed Countess filed no protest against the distortion of the facts.

In the above article, all translation citations are made as from English editions.

COVER COMPETITION

We regret the delay in announcing the result of the SIGHT AND SOUND Cover Competition. The number of entries received was very considerable, and—grateful though we are for this—as a result the judging has taken longer than was anticipated. The result of the Competition will be made known during July, when all entrants will be informed directly of the result.

(ORSON WELLES, Continued from page 38)

sufficient frequency, with the absolute certainty that they will be not only noted but misconstrued. My own belief is that to possess genius is one thing, to become it is another, and that the second process is one that depends on the quality, not of what one is, but of what one does. That Orson is the possessor of genius I, who have witnessed his prodigious talent at work, have seen one creation that skids as near as dammit to the highest, have listened to his conversation at its best and worst, have no doubt. That he is, in fact, a genius, one waits for further proof; for while there have been people who, on the strength of one single work, can claim to the title, these are as rare among their more prolific peers as genius itself is rare among humanity; and deep as is my admiration for his finest achievement, I would hesitate to place *Citizen Kane* beside, say, *Wuthering Heights*.

But this is carping, fidgety, ferretty probing; just the sort of analysis so foreign to the generous, overwhelming, voluminous quality of his own essential being, that it seems inadequate and out of place, as though one attempted to assess a thunderbolt with a bare and rather querulous bodkin. Yet he is too lively and lovable a creature to set up finally, unquestioned and unquestionable, as a monument, to be visited from a sense of duty and revered as an ingrown habit. And anyway, he loathes monuments. With him the Renaissance is as questionable as the Reformation: only the Bible and the Middle Ages are really safe. Many great individuals of the past, that the world has raised to a conventional height, arouse in him the gravest doubts—Goethe, for example, is suspect, and Eleonora Duse in continuous near-comedy peril, Chopin and Wagner are tactfully dismissed, and Shakespeare himself may become at any moment material in his hands for patchwork quilt. An accepted position in the popular imagination becomes an immediate target for his arrow; and if he himself were accepted, monumentated, made cathedral-like, what would become of him? How he would squirm and writhe, how he would protest and stamp his feet and bellow out:—

"Hey! Hey you! Fellow! What's been going on here? What kind of a pedestal is this?"

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July 1953—June 1954

Volume 23 (New Quarterly Series) Nos. 1-4

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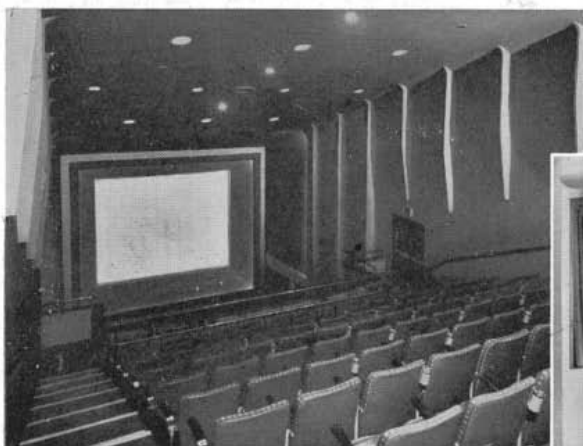
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